

# SELECTED LETTERS OF Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

*Edited by*  
ALVIN MOORE, JR.  
*and*  
RAMA POONAMBULAM COOMARASWAMY

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*Compiled by*

RAMA POONAMBULAM COOMARASWAMY

*with assistance from*

SABAPATHI PILLAI DURAI RAJA SINGAM

*and with a Foreword by*

WHITALL N. PERRY

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Let it be noted at the outset that Coomaraswamy cannot be lumped with those swamis East or West, or like types, who peddle a bogus "spirituality" that is vague, delusory and deceitful. I believe further that Coomaraswamy had no designs on us in the West except to return us to the sources of our own wisdom.

Ray Livingston in his preface to his  
*The Traditional Theory of Literature*,  
University of Minnesota Press, 1962

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## FOREWORD

In the wake of Ananda Coomaraswamy's extensive writings, volumes of accolades have come forth in praise of his enormous erudition. But here in these letters for the first time we see the man writing intimately about himself; not in an autobiographical sense, which he detested, considering such portraiture "a vulgar catering to illegitimate curiosity" (p 25), "a rather ghoulish and despicable trade" (p 25). This attitude was with him, moreover, "not a matter of 'modesty', but one of principle" (p 25). His writing of himself was rather in the sense of establishing a personal contact with each correspondent through the painstaking effort of getting a questioner to see the why and wherefore of his thought processes. Reading these letters is like looking over his shoulder and watching how his perceptions and ideas flow.

Eric Gill said it all when he wrote to the Doctor: "You hit bloody straight, bloody hard, and bloody often." For Coomaraswamy was uncompromisingly honest; thus in a letter to Albert Schweitzer on this missionary's *Christianity and the Religions of the World*: "[I] would like to let you know that I regard it as a fundamentally dishonest work."

Uncompromisingly charitable, as in a six-page letter to a psychiatrist: "Your letter. . .brought tears to my eyes. Yours is a personal instance of the whole modern world of impoverished reality. . . You caught the very sickness you were treating. . . You did not shake off the effluvium from your fingers after laying on your hands." Pages of appropriate counsel follow.

And uncompromisingly generous, instanced for example in his long answers to letters from the Gandhian Richard Gregg who was seeking clarification on such matters as realism and nominalism, being and knowing, knowledge and opinion, being and becoming, reincarnationist theories, and the question of "psychic residues".

Rama Coomaraswamy had first considered calling this collection of his father's correspondence *Letters from a Hindu to His Christian Friends*. But although the young Ananda received



the investiture of the Sacred Thread in Ceylon in 1897, he was educated in England and later lived as a Westerner, and was Platonist and a Medievalist as much as a Vedantist. And his correspondents were with few exceptions not religious by vocation but academicians, albeit of Christian heritage. He situated his own position as "a follower of the *Philosophia Perennis*, or if required to be more specific, a Vedantin."

We see from these letters that Coomaraswamy was totally realistic in his assessment of Eastern and Western values. To Professor F. S. C. Northrup, he says that he tells Western inquirers: "Why seek wisdom in India? The value of the Eastern tradition for you is not that of a difference, but that it *can remind* you of what you have forgotten," adding that "the notion of a common humanity is not enough for peace; what is needed is our common divinity." Elsewhere he writes that "East and West have a common problem." And he complains to the German art historian, Herman Goetz, that the great majority of Indian students in the West are really "*disorganized barbarians*" and "cultural illiterates." "The modern young Indian (with exceptions) is in no position to meet the really cultured and spiritual European." Again to Northrup, he says, "I am still fully convinced that the metaphysics of East and West are essentially the same until the time of the Western deviation from the common norms," when Western thought shifted (ca 1300) from realism to nominalism.

Now he writes to the *New English Weekly*, "the 'civilization' that men are supposed to be fighting for is already a museum piece." Elsewhere: "The magnitude of our means and the multiplicity of our ideas are in fact the measure of our decadence." And near the close of his life, in his address (included here) on "the Renaissance of Indian Culture", given at Harvard on August 15, 1947, he says: "our problem is not so much one of the rebirth of an Indian culture, as it is one of preserving what remains of it. This culture is valid for us not so much because it is Indian as because it is culture." In a letter addressing the need for a realistic ground of understanding, he writes that he can "see no basis for such a common understanding other than that of the common universe of discourse of the *Philosophia Perennis*, which was the *lingua franca* of all cultures before the 'confusion of tongues'." And he reiterates time and again in his letters the necessity for people to turn to the



traditional authorities of our age in order to get their metaphysical bearings: men like Frithjof Schuon, René Guénon and Marco Pallis.

As foremost heir to Medieval wisdom the Catholic Church in Coomaraswamy's eyes bore a priceless legacy coupled with an enormous responsibility; and although continually inviting Christians to share with him in the rediscovery of this treasure, the Doctor was with few exceptions thwarted by their incapacity for adequate response. Conversion, they exclaimed, not reciprocal comprehension, was the only way to salvation. "Please do not pray that I may become a Christian," replied Coomaraswamy to a nun's entreaties; "pray only that I may know God better every day." And he foresaw what was coming to the Church when he wrote to another Catholic: "The humanisation, ie, secularisation of scripture accompanies the humanisation of Christ."

His attitude on an esoteric aspect of Christianity is disclosed in his words to Eric Gill about a "wonderful Mary legend" he has read, saying that "there is a Vedic parallel too, where Wisdom is said to reveal her very body to some. Perhaps you can print this legend someday, and I could write a few words of introduction. On the other hand, perhaps the world does not deserve such things nowadays!"

Regarding his own path, Coomaraswamy wrote, "I fully hold that *labore est orare* and do regard my work as a vocation." But "when I go to India," he said in a letter to Marco Pallis, "it will be to drop writing . . . my object in 'retiring' being to *verify* what I already 'know'." Meanwhile, in his seventieth year he wrote, "the *Bhagavad Gita* and Upanishads are daily reading for me."

These letters convey a constant tone of the Doctor's own self-effacement. He puts forth his principles unflaggingly, while never putting forth himself, saying he is only an exponent for the ideas of others: "[I] try to say nothing that can properly be attributed to me individually." To the traditional Catholic, Bernard Kelley, he wrote: "It can only be said that the mystic is acting 'selfishly' when there really remains in him a 'self'." The word *idiot*, he reminds another correspondent, means "virtually 'one who thinks for himself'." And in another place: "Satan was the first to think of *himself* as a genius."

All this touches on the axis around which Coomaraswamy's



later exposition revolved, namely, the postulate of the two selves or "minds"—*duo sunt in homine*—and its ineluctable corollary, on the necessity for self-naughting. With incredible thoroughness he pursued parallels from Western and Eastern sources, to Sankara's presentation of Advaita Vedanta, the doctrine of monism or non-duality. And Coomaraswamy's intransigence regarding the sole true reality of our Higher Self—"the One and Only Transmigrant", St Paul's "not I, but [the] Christ [that] liveth in me"—was compounded by his insistence on the infallibility of immutable archetype and myth over mutable accident and history, to the point even of permitting himself an expression of doubt concerning the historicity of Christ and the Buddha. In order to situate the paradox of this tendency to excess at the expense of fact, we have to remind ourselves that Coomaraswamy found himself confronting a blind generation with timeless truths, in an age of "impoverished reality" wherein most people no longer "see" what is beyond their senses. In a world where religion for the multitude has become equated with moral precepts on the level of "Be good, dear child", the metaphysician felt the need to repost with the thunder of ultimates on the level of "Everything will perish save God's Countenance" (*Qu'ran* xxviii, 88). To reply that the Doctor could better have struck a happy medium in these matters is to ask that Coomaraswamy not be Coomaraswamy.

He admits the Plotinian concept of "distinction without difference" in the Noumenal Sphere where "all souls are one", yet in actual exegesis he virtually reduces the human soul to a "process" of becoming, without final reality. In part his emphasis on this point was to refute the popular notion of reincarnation, currently a dogma in India and one particularly vexing to him as it lends an exaggerated importance to the accidental ego of this man so-and-so, and also because his insistence on the fallacy of the belief invited criticism from erudite Hindus who otherwise admired his writings.

It may be well to state here that reincarnationism derives from misconceptions of basic Eastern teachings having to do with the Round of Existence or *samsara*, this being the transmigration of souls to other states of existence insofar as the impurities of ignorance have not been wholly eradicated in



them, that purification which alone leads to enlightenment and final deliverance from the meshes of existence and becoming. But this teaching has to be situated in terms of the limitless modalities and immensities of cosmic time and space (in which "God does not repeat Himself"), whereas reincarnationism credulously reduces transmigration through the multiple states of the being to a kind of garden-variety genealogy played out on the scale of this world's stage.

To a question about a prominent Indian put by S. Durai Raja Singam, the man who was to become the indefatigable compiler of Coomaraswamy memorabilia, the Doctor replied in 1946: [He] is a saint, not an intellectual giant; I am neither but I do say that those whose authority I rely on when I speak have often been both." People may think what they like about whether he was either, neither, or the two concurrently, but it cannot be denied that he certainly vehicled an aura of both.

He was fond of quoting St Paul to the effect that God has never left Himself without a witness. In the traditional patrimony that Coomaraswamy has handed on we have an eloquent testimony to this.

WHITALL N. PERRY

## PREFACE

It is both a great privilege and an extraordinary experience to have selected, and along with Alvin Moore, to have edited the letters of Ananda Coomaraswamy. One wonders, in the face of his enormous literary output, how he was able to carry on such a fruitful correspondence. The number of letters probably runs to several thousand and one would hope, that over the course of time many more will turn up. These can, almost without exception, be divided into four categories: those dealing with inquiries about works of art—either requests for identification, evaluation or possible purchase by the Boston Museum; those responding to or dealing with philosophical or metaphysical issues; those written to the *New England Weekly*; and lastly a handful of brief personal notes to his mother, wife, or children.

There are various reasons why the letters of famous men are published. In the case of some, they reflect the times they lived in. Others give insights into the personal life of the author, or clues as to what induced him to enter the public forum. Still others are examples of literary art—so called “*belle lettres*”. Those of Dr Coomaraswamy are none of these. Indeed, what is extraordinary about them is that they contain nothing personal, even when written to close friends and associates. He had said once, in response to a request for an autobiography, that “portraiture of human beings is *aswarga*”, and that such an attitude was a matter, not of modesty, but of principle. His letters reflect this attitude.

I have said that there are several thousand letters. Unfortunately, not all of these have been collected or collated. Many have undoubtedly been lost. Thus for example, his own files show perhaps a hundred letters from Marco Pallis. Unfortunately, none of his to Mr. Pallis survive as the latter consistently destroyed all mail after reading. Again, there are a large number of letters to him from Rene Guenon. However, the Guenon archives have revealed or at least, produced none from him. Several European and American libraries have letters from him dispersed in collections of other notables such as Yeates or Sorokin. Still other letters are archived in private

collections such as T. S. Eliott. Hopefully one response to the publication of these carefully selected examples will be a more complete collation, with hitherto unknown examples becoming available.

The selection process was fairly simple. All the available letters—either originals or carbon copies—were read and classified as to major topics of discussion. These sub groups were then weeded out so as to avoid excessive length and repetition. The end result is some 400 letters which can truly be said to be characteristic.

The remarkable thing about these letters is that each of them is a sort of "mini-essay" put forth in relatively easy language. Despite this, they cover almost every major line of thought that is developed in his published works. Those who would seek an introduction to the writings of Ananda Coomaraswamy could do no better than to start with this book.

It is both fitting and wonderful, that the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts should select this work as the first publication in its planned collected works of Ananda Coomaraswamy. If he was a universalist in principle, he was above all an Indian in his origins and ways of thinking. It had been his plan to return to India where he intended to continue his works, produce a translation of the Upanishads, and then take *Sanyasa*. God willed otherwise and only his ashes were returned to the land he loved. Hence it is—one says it again—both fitting and wonderful that India should undertake to make available to the world, not only his letters, but the entire corpus of his works.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the co-operation of all who have assisted in making this volume possible by providing copies of Dr Coomaraswamy's letters which have been included in this collection. We thank the University of Minnesota for permission to use the lines from Ray Livingston's *The Traditional Theory of Literature* which are placed in exergue to this volume; the heirs of Devin-Adair publishers for permission to quote in the Introduction the paragraph from Eric Gill's *Autobiography*. Our thanks are due also to Sri Keshavram N. Iengar of Bangalore, India; Mr and Mrs Eric H. Hansen, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia; Dr René Imelée, West Georgia College, Carrollton, Georgia; and to the librarians and staff members of the Emory University library and the library of West Georgia College. And certainly not least, we thank our respective spouses for their encouragement, patience and practical help.

ALVIN MOORE, JR.  
RAMA POONAMBULAM COOMARASWAMY

In the late half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century scholars from all parts of the world were drawn to the Asian heritage. Some excavated, others brought to light primary textual material, and a third group dwelled upon fundamental concepts, identified perennial sources, and created bridges of communication by juxtaposing diverse traditions. They were the pathfinders: they drew attention to the unity and wholeness of life behind manifestation and process. Cutting across sectarian concerns, religious dogma and conventional notions of the spiritual East and materialist West, of monotheism and polytheism, they were responsible for laying the foundations of a new approach to Indian and Asian art. Their work is of contemporary relevance and validity for the East and the West. Restless and unsatisfied with fragmentation, there is a search for roots and comprehension, perception and experience

of the whole. Seminars on renewal, regeneration and beginnings have been held. The time is ripe to bring the work of these early torch bearers to the attention of future generations. The name of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy is foremost among these pathfinders—for the expanse of his grasp, the depth of his insights, and for their validity today.

To fulfil the need for renewed search for the whole, as also to stimulate further work with this free and catholic approach which is not imprisoned in the walls of ideology, the Kala Kosa Division of the IGNCA has initiated a programme of publication of works of critical scholarship, reprints and translations. The criterion of identification is the value of the work for its cross-cultural perception, multi-disciplinary approach and inaccessibility for reasons of language or on account of being out of print.

The Collected Works of A. K. Coomaraswamy, thematically rearranged with the author's own revisions, is central to the IGNCA's third programme in its division of Textual Research and Publication, Kala Kosa. The present volume of the *Selected Letters of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy* commences this series.

The IGNCA is grateful to Dr Rama P. Coomaraswamy for agreeing to allow the IGNCA to republish the collected works, and for his generosity in relinquishing claims on royalties. Alvin Moore, an old associate of Coomaraswamy, has painstakingly edited the present volume along with Dr Rama P. Coomaraswamy. We are grateful to both of them. Mr Keshav Ram Iengar has to be thanked for his life-time devotion, his interest, and his assistance in proof-reading and preparing the index.

We also thank Mr Jyotish Dutta Gupta for rendering invaluable help in the production, Mr K. L. Khosa for designing the jacket and Mr K. V. Srinivasan for ably assisting in this project.

KAPILA VATSYAYAN  
INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS



## INTRODUCTION

It seems fitting to introduce these letters selected from the extensive correspondence of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy with a paragraph from his close friend Eric Gill, Catholic, artisan, artist and author of distinguished reputation. Gill wrote, in his *Autobiography*:

. . . There was one person, to whom I think William Rothenstein introduced me, whom I might not have met otherwise and for whose influence I am deeply grateful. I mean the philosopher and theologian Ananda Coomaraswamy. Others have written the truth about life and religion and man's work. Others have written good clear English. Others have had the gift of witty expression. Others have understood the metaphysics of Christianity, and others have understood the metaphysics of Hinduism and Buddhism. Others have understood the true significance of erotic drawings and sculptures. Others have seen the relationships of the good, the true and the beautiful. Others have had apparently unlimited learning. Others have loved; others have been kind and generous. But I know of no one else in whom all these gifts and all these powers have been combined. I dare not confess myself his disciple; that would only embarrass him. I can only say that no other living writer has written the truth in matters of art and life and religion and piety with such wisdom and understanding.

This citation gives a very discerning insight into the character of the mature Coomaraswamy. But one may, quite properly, want to know something more of the life and circumstances of this son of East and West who corresponded so widely and who left so many letters that are deemed worthy of publication even after so many years. Moreover, what could a non-Christian have to say that could be of any possible interest to the serious Christian?

The writer of these letters was born in 1877 in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), of a Tamil father and an English mother. The father, Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, was a particu-

larly able member of an outstanding Tamil, Hindu family that had been long settled in Ceylon but which had retained its ties, especially religious ties, with India. Sir Mutu was the first Asian and the first Hindu to be called to the bar in Britain, in 1863, and a man whose personal presence and achievement gained for him an entrance into upper social circles in England. He counted Disraeli among his friends, eg, and Disraeli even took him as model for one of his fictional characters. The mother was Elizabeth Clay Beeby, of a Kent family prominent in the India and Ceylon trade. The couple had been married in 1875 by no less an ecclesiastic than the Archbishop of Canterbury. This was certainly no casual miscegenation, such as had been all too common and even encouraged in colonial India; on the contrary, it was the purposeful union of two strong minds and independent spirits. But an interracial marriage is not likely to be easy; and, over a hundred years ago, the couple must have faced distinct difficulties both among the Victorian English and in the East among orthodox Hindus. The young Ananda, however, was to combine in himself the better qualities of both races. He was himself to become ritually one of the twice-born among the Hindus, and he was to grow into an apostle of the traditional East (now no longer identifiable geographically) to men hungering and thirsting for spiritual and intellectual sustenance in the meaningless wastes of the modern world. Remarkably, and only to a slightly lesser degree, he was an apostle of the *traditional* West as well; for he was intimately familiar with the corpus of Medieval Christian philosophy, theology, literature and art, as well as with Platonism and Neoplatonism.

In 1877, after two years in Ceylon and the birth of her son, Lady Coomaraswamy, not yet thirty, returned to England for a visit. Sir Mutu was to follow but, tragically, died on the very day he was to have sailed from Colombo. It was thus that the young mother and her child remained in Britain. The young Ananda was educated in England, first at home, then at a public school (Wycliffe, in Gloucestershire), and finally at the University of London which he entered at eighteen. He graduated from the latter in 1900 with honors in botony (gardening was a lifelong interest) and geology. Later, his university was to award him its doctorate in science (1906) for his work in the mineralogy of Ceylon; for between 1902 and 1906 the young



scientist had worked in the land of his birth, making the first mineralogical survey of the island. His competence as a scientist is indicated by the fact that he identified a previously unknown mineral, *serendibite*. And characteristically, he chose not to name it after himself, which he would have been fully entitled to do. Much of this original work done by Coomaraswamy is still in use.

Survey activities required extensive field work, and Coomaraswamy found these duties particularly congenial. His continuing presence in the field gave him numerous occasions to move among the Tamil and Sinhalese\* villages, especially the latter, and to observe rural life and the practice of the local crafts; and notably, to observe the blighting effect of the European presence on indigenous culture and values. One of his early concerns was a campaign to encourage the use of traditional dress in preference to European clothing, in which many Asians—particularly women—often looked so awkward.

Moving between England and Ceylon as he frequently did, Coomaraswamy had numerous opportunities for travel in India. He did so in 1901, again in 1906, and more extensively in 1910–1911. Already in Ceylon he had been active in social reform and educational movements, and he figured prominently in the campaign to found a national university in that country. It was a natural step to pursue related interests in India, which he was coming to view as cultural macrocosm to Ceylon's microcosm. In India his interests shifted towards Indian nationalism and its written expressions, and then towards a personal survey of the arts and artifacts of the subcontinent. He began collecting extensively but discriminatingly in folk music, and especially in miniature paintings. In fact, early on, he gained an international reputation on the basis of work begun in this inception of his professional life. Later, he offered his superior collection of Indian miniatures to the country if a national museum could be built to house them; but when funds were not forthcoming for this purpose, he brought

\* The Sinhalese, generally Hinayana Buddhists, are the majority in the population of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The energetic and enterprising Tamils, generally Hindu, are Dravidians from adjacent South India and are the largest minority group in the island nation, where they have been settled for many centuries.

the collection to the United States where it is housed primarily at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

*Medieval Sinhalese Art*, his first major publication, was a book for which he did not only the field work (assisted by his wife Ethel), but which he personally saw through the press—this latter being William Morris' old Kelmscott Press which had come into Coomaraswamy's possession. This book is testimony not only to Coomaraswamy's competence as art historian, but also to a high degree of personal and methodological discipline. A second major publication was his *Rajput Painting* (1916), which bore the lengthy subtitle: *Being an Account of Hindu Paintings of Rajasthan and the Punjab\* Himalayas from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century Described in Relation to Contemporary Thought with Texts and Translations*. All this is cited to make a specific point: the phrase "described in relation to contemporary thought" offers an important key to Coomaraswamy's approach in many of his more profound studies written in later years. He would, eg, present a painting, a sculpture, a weapon or a ritual object and on the basis of the relevant Scriptural or other texts offer erudite and profound, lucid and highly concentrated expositions of the ideas of which the artifact was, so to speak, a palpable representation. This approach implies the nullity of the precious distinctions that are commonly assumed to distinguish the "fine" from the applied arts, for traditionally the governing rules and manners of production are the same. All appearances proceed from the interior outwards, from the art and science of the artist to the artifact; and, ultimately, from an uncreated and principal Interior to the manifested or created order, from God to the world. The manner of this divine operation, in final analysis, is the paradigm of the artist as practitioner. There can be no traditional justification for an art that imitates nature only in her external aspects, *natura naturata*, mere fact: nor for an art that aims only at aesthetic pleasure; and even less for an art conceived as nothing more than the expression of the individual artist, ie, vulgar exhibitionism—not to mention "surreal art",

\* At the time Coomaraswamy was travelling and collecting in Rajasthan and in the Punjab, the latter was a much larger entity than it is today, for it has undergone several divisions. It then consisted of the areas that are now included in the Punjab province of Pakistan, Indian or East Punjab, and the Indian states of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.



which is an eruption of the subconscious into the waking state, like a nightmare experienced at midday.

There were themes that Coomaraswamy reiterated in season, out of season. They represent intuitions that were with him from the beginning, but their eloquent articulation which was to characterize his later writing was not arrived at suddenly; he worked his way to this undoubted extended mastery. One very important step in this maturation was the invitation extended to him in 1917 by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to become Keeper of their Indian collections. So it was that at the age of forty, uncomfortable in the Britain that frowned upon his Indian sympathies, and already with an international reputation, Coomaraswamy accepted the American offer and began the association with the Boston Museum and the United States that endured thirty years—until his death in 1947. His tenure was by no means a sinecure, but the Boston Museum did provide both the necessary freedom and the favorable ambience for the flowering of one of the most wide-ranging and profoundest intelligences that have ever worked in the United States. In Boston, Coomaraswamy settled in for years of work in collections development, in technical studies, in writing; and generally in making known the results of his findings and thinking on an intensely learned level, but also as occasion offered, on more popular levels, eg, in radio talks and in public lectures. But he conceived of his vocation as primarily addressing the learned, as being a teacher to teachers, believing that thereby the impact of his work might be the greater. He wrote to Eric Hill that “. . . it is a matter of definite policy on my part to work within the academic . . . sphere: this is analagous to the idea of the reform of a school of thought within, instead of an attack without. . . .”<sup>\*</sup> His wife, Doña Luisa, recalled his rhetorical question: “What would I have ever done without my doctorate?” His credentials and his achievements won for him a hearing; but especially in his later years when his writing was more profound and his expression more uncompromising, it was a hearing for views that were

<sup>\*</sup> By contrast, his contemporary and friend René Guénon worked in pioneering isolation and let pass no opportunity to disparage académie, especially the ‘official’ Orientalists. As a consequence, only within the last decade or so has the scholarly world begun to take note of this body of work which, quite simply, can no longer be ignored.

anything but popular and that were particularly at variance with conventional opinion typifying the secularist mentality so prevalent among the educated.

The author of these letters considered himself a Hindu; moreover, he is recognized within this tradition as an orthodox exponent of Hindu doctrine. The word "orthodox" is used here in its proper sense of one who is sound or correct in doctrine and opinion; one whose expositions reflect, not willful personal views, but a homogeneity of thought proper to the spiritual perspective of the Tradition from which he speaks. It may be noted that of all the extant traditional forms, Hinduism is the oldest and is thus considered nearest the Primordial Tradition. Hinduism is also the most universal, including within its fold almost all the perspectives which have, *mutatis mutandis*, been more specifically developed in one of the other orthodox Traditions. As an outstanding scholar, Coomaraswamy was familiar with the traditional writings and perspectives of Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, the doctrines of the American Indians, the Platonists and Neoplatonists; and especially those of Hinduism and Christianity. Indeed, he had dreamt of writing, as he said, *con amore* about the latter. Coomaraswamy was on the side of the angels, a pre-eminent witness to the ineluctable priority of Intelligence. He was one of three remarkable men\* whose Heaven sent vocations have been, in varying degrees and foci, to recall to a secularized and dispirited contemporary humanity what and who man is, what it means to be man, and what is man's proper destiny.

Coomaraswamy was a universalist in that he understood and believed totally in the transcendent unity of religions\*\*. It follows that he did not believe that the Christian Revelation

\* The other two are Frithjof Schuon and René Guénon, whose names (especially the latter) appear from time to time in these letters, and whose published works are mentioned in the bibliographical section at the end of this volume.

\*\* *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* is the title of the first major work of Frithjof Schuon which appeared in 1948 (the original French edition). T. S. Eliot, then with Faber and Faber, London, which published the first English translation, gave a very favorable endorsement of the book. It is a landmark with which Coomaraswamy would have been in full agreement. Note that the operative word, however, is *transcendent*; Schuon never minimizes the genuine differences which providentially and necessarily separate the several traditional forms.



was the sole initiative of Heaven towards mankind, but rather that the Incarnation of Jesus Christ was one descent among numerous others of the Eternal Avatar, the Logos, the Divine Intellect. Nevertheless, he wrote: “. . . my natural growth, had I been entirely a product of Europe and known no other tradition, would ere now have made me a Roman [Catholic]”, p 80, letter to Eric Gill). But he did know more than one tradition and this was a condition of his immense value to us. He could respond to the nun who wrote, urging him to join the Roman Church: “I am too catholic to be a Catholic.” For he had come to understand that it is the essence and not this or that modality of religion that is immutable, a perspective which made him prefer the word *religion*, singular, to *religions*, plural; or, as “. . . I should prefer to say, ‘forms of religion,’” (p 81). Like his contemporary, René Guénon, however, he did not always make sufficient allowance for the necessary exclusivisms which separate one traditional form from another, nor for the distinctions, fully justified on their own levels, which separate the exoteric and esoteric realms. But perhaps this is understandable in some measure, as being a function of his remarkable intellectual penetration of the several Traditions, Christianity and Hinduism especially—a penetration much deeper than that of even above average contemporary theologians.

As regards linguistics alone, eg, Coomaraswamy could say: “I should never dream of making use of a Gospel text without referring to the Greek, and considering also the earlier history of the Greek words employed. . .”. He was editor for Gaelic and Icelandic entries for Webster’s dictionary, having as a young man done a translation of the *Völuspa* from the Icelandic of the *Elder Edda*. Among the classical languages, he knew Greek, Latin, Sanskrit and Pali and routinely used them in his work; in addition, he knew some Persian and Chinese. Among the modern languages, he knew French, German and Hindi as well as being a master of English. The modern languages have undoubtedly suffered qualitative attenuation in the process of their steady accommodations to our prevailing horizontal and centrifugally oriented mind-sets; but Coomaraswamy demonstrated that a master can compensate for this in large measure and give expression to the most profound and subtle ideas even in languages that have not been used in

speculative\* writing for centuries. At this point, one cannot but recall the first Pentecost and the “gift of tongues” (Acts ii, 2–11) when the Apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, spoke so as to be heard and understood by pilgrims from “all nations under Heaven”\*\*—a kind of reversal of the malediction of Babel. The work of Coomaraswamy has something of this pentecostal quality—in the original, not in the sectarian sense—implying some measure of inspiration by the Spirit of Truth, some degree of contact with the suprapersonal Intellect. *Spiritus ubi vult spirat*, “the Spirit bloweth where it listeth” (Jn iii, 8). It is thus that the most profound conceptions can be articulated with all requisite authority when the proper occasion demands it; and it is thus that these conceptions cannot be the exclusive property of any particular segment of humanity. In his own case, Coomaraswamy prescinded from this obvious unity in diversity to say: “What I regard as the proper end of ‘Comparative Religion’ is the demonstration of fundamental truths by a cloud of witnesses”.\*\*\* And it was in this vein that he demonstrated the most striking parallels, eg, in the writings of St Thomas Aquinas and the Hindu *shruti* and *smriti*, \*\*\* and not only as between these by any means. Speaking as a Hindu (and, one might add, as a Platonist), and in

\* The word ‘speculative’ can serve as a convenient example of precisely this attenuation. The primary modern sense, when not referring to financial manipulations, has to do with fantasy or imaginative thinking severed from existential and especially palpable realities. Originally and etymologically, the word refers to intellectual realities—‘the same yesterday, today, and forever’—and the capacity of the human intelligence to understand these realities.

\*\* Coomaraswamy would have noted that the *heaven* in question was that as conceived by the ancient Mediterranean world. But he would have been quite certain that the Christian Scriptures are in no way diminished when we recognize that there were no Chinese, Red Indians or Incas among the Apostles’ auditors.

\*\*\* A powerful apologetic tool is neglected more often than not when Christians fail to make use of the ‘probable’ evidences available in non-Christian traditions. It is somewhat as if St Thomas had rejected Aristotle.

\*\*\*\* *Shruti*, in Hinduism, is the highest degree of Revelation, being direct contact with Divine realities. *Smriti* derives its authority from the *shruti* via reflection, comparable in this respect to certain aspects of the Epistles of St Paul. Among the parallels Coomaraswamy found as between the Hindu Scriptures and Christian doctrine, we may mention that of the one Essence



the face of Christian exclusivism, he could say—with great *caritas*—"I am on your side, even if you are not on mine".

Obviously, all the several Traditions have their respective points of view *vis-à-vis* the theses stated or implied above, and we cannot pursue these here. We must limit our remarks to contemporary Christianity as it is seen and known about us. At first slowly but steadily, and now at a rapidly accelerating pace, we have seen the Faith enter into a decline: intellectually and conceptually, artistically, socially and morally. And now today one sees an astonishing convergence of what is taken to be the Christian message (and which is often only caricature at best) with a frank worldliness. On a merely extrinsic reckoning, Christianity has long since ceased to be a formative influence in modern life (individual exceptions granted), having become itself a follower—of secular humanism, progress, evolutionism, scientism and other fashionable and more or less ephemeral trends. Multitudes of those who should normally be Christian have deserted the Faith. Not a few of these have taken to strange cults, which, in our decaying culture as in ancient Rome, proliferate like flies. Others have turned to one or another of the Oriental religions, a move which often affords occasions of ridicule by those less in earnest or—momentarily—in less apparent need. It must be admitted, however, that in all too many cases the forms of Oriental religion accessible in the West\* are of doubtful soundness—though there are clear and definite exceptions. In these last times, when we find "Christian" spokesmen expounding all manner of strange notions from within the Church and the Churches, when the Christian vocabulary and idiom are widely used to disguise non-Christian and even counter-Christian purposes, it is most appropriate that Dr Coomaraswamy's letters to his learned friends should be made public. For as Ray Livingston said in the lines cited in exergue above: "Let it be noted . . . that Coomaraswamy cannot be lumped with those

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and two natures, the rôle of the Word and the primordially of sound, and the procession and return of creatures.

\* As for Hinduism itself, it is not a proselytizing faith and the non-Hindu does not have the option of converting to Hinduism, entry into which is by birth into one of the four traditional castes. This says all that need be said here about the so-called Hindu sects which have been so conspicuous in the West.



swamis\* of East or West, or like types, who peddle a bogus 'spirituality' that is vague, delusory and deceitful . . . . Coomaraswamy had no designs on us . . . except to return us to the sources of our own wisdom."

Coomaraswamy had found in art a window onto the Universal; and from a maturing interest in art as illustrative of ideas, particularly metaphysical ideas, in the last fifteen years or so of his life his primary interest was in the ideas themselves: in the metaphysical doctrine that is the heritage of humanity as such, ideas which embody those principles by which civilizations rise and fall and which are variously expressed in the several traditional forms—*una veritas in variis signis, variae resplendet, ad maiorem gloriam Dei*, "one truth in various forms, variously resplendent, to the greater glory of God", an aphorism which Coomaraswamy liked to quote. It is in this area, as metaphysician and comparative religionist, that Coomaraswamy can and should be of the greatest interest to those willing to make the effort involved in following his dialectic, namely those whose powers of attention and concentration have not been utterly vitiated by the host distractions which—purposely, it would seem—permeate modern life. He can be instrumental in helping restore some sense of the transcendent dimension to one's understanding of a Christianity which, officially, has all too often become worldly, banal and insipid—in the Gospel expression, *unsavory*.

There are doubtless some who would criticize Dr Coomaraswamy as an elitist, though in the nature of things such judgements can have little intrinsic force or significance. For there *are* men (and, of course, women, too, for *man* and *men* cover all humanity)—there are men, we say, who have superior intellectual and spiritual gifts, far above the average, so much so that a common humanity serves only to cloak for the undiscerning the fact that interiorly men can differ almost as much as angels from animals. "God giveth without stint to whom He will", says the *Qu'ran*. And to some Heaven has given the vocation, appointed the task of recalling men to their inalienable spiritual and intellectual patrimony. Ananda Coomaraswamy was one of these few; men with whom

\* The word *swamy* is itself a perfectly respectable honorific, and it was evidently incorporated into the Coomara family name at some point, as is not uncommon in India.

"Heaven does . . . as we with torches do, not light them for themselves." The first fifty years or so of his life were almost as a period of training for the last decade and a half. During that latter period he was consumed in the effort to recall the modern world, through those scholars whom he specifically addressed, to the intellectual/spiritual birthright that has been abandoned, to a saner manner of life, a life that might take due account of the whole man and especially of the claims of the Inner Man, the Man in everyman (a phrase he often used). Our task is to know who and what we are; because we, being manifold, have the duty to appraise ourselves and to become aware of the number and nature of our constituents, some of which we ignore as we commonly ignore our very principle and manner of being—to adapt words of Plotinus (*Enneads* VI.7.14). Coomaraswamy took his calling quite seriously; nevertheless, he was far from being puritanical or shrunken; indeed, the humane amplitude of the man was inescapable and remarkable. He believed that living according to Heaven-given designs assured not only the fullest possible happiness in *this* life, but also plenitude of joy and perfect fulfillment *outré tombe*. One of the great weaknesses he perceived in religion in the modern West was the wide tendency (since his death, greatly accentuated) to reduce the claims of religion to merely social and ethical considerations, ie, the most external and derivative aspects of a Tradition. He saw that religion needs to return to doctrine, and this in a more profound sense than anything Christianity has known since the Middle Ages.

What we need is the revival of Christian dogma. This is precisely where the East is of use and help. I have been told by Catholics that my own work has given them renewed confidence, which is just the effect it *should* have . . . ethics have no power of their own . . . they become a mere sentiment and do little or nothing to better the world.

Further, following St Thomas and other traditional doctrines, he distinguished faith, which is an intellectual virtue in its intrinsic nature, from mere ". . . 'fideism' which only amounts to credulity, as exercised in connection with postulates, slogans and all kinds of wishful thinking".

Should one doubt Coomaraswamy's sincerity in all the positions he advocated, there are several tests one might apply.



Whitall Perry mentioned several in his Foreword—the man's honesty, his generosity, his self-effacement. In this latter, Coomaraswamy is reminiscent of Plotinus, who refused to allow *his* portrait to be painted on the grounds that no one could benefit from the image of an image. Additionally, one might consider Coomaraswamy's indefatigable labours spread over many years, and his large indifference to copyright interests as regards his own work. The man was essentially disinterested.

We have commented on Coomaraswamy the metaphysician, on his comprehensive view of man and the world, on his vast erudition. These qualities are as valuable today, probably more so, as when he wrote; before, be it noted, the II Vatican Council and its devastating *aggiornamento* with the accompanying public eruption of modernism into the heart of Christianity. Were there no shortcomings in the man? Is this brief sketch mere extravagant hagiography, simply a litany of praise? It is yes to the first and no to the second question. Whitall Perry has noted several aspects of Coomaraswamy's ruling perspectives that do require qualification; and there are a few additional points that need to be made in this connection. When Coomaraswamy wrote, he found that available translations of Oriental texts and expositions of traditional doctrine were usually inadequate at best and commonly little better than caricatures. Skeptics, non-believers, nominalists and rationalists, on the basis of no more than a presumed linguistic competence, set themselves to translate and expound the most abstruse texts and doctrines of the traditional East; and, not surprisingly, the results betrayed the originals. But in the half century since Dr Coomaraswamy's death, this situation has changed substantially, thanks in no small part to the efforts of AKC himself. It is not that there are no longer inadequate translations nor expositions that delude: it is rather that due to the efforts of a number of traditionalists: men like René Guénon, Titus Burckhardt, Marco Pallis, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and especially Frithjof Schuon, as well as those of AKC and a few others of like mind and inspiration, there now exists a very respectable body of expository and interpretative work in which we have a touchstone for judgement.\* Let it be noted, too, that the traditional East has continued to play a necessary

\* See bibliographical section at the end of this collection for further suggestions. Note, too, that translations, however good, seldom rise to the

and positive rôle in reintroducing to the modern West essential conceptions of the metaphysical and traditional order, conceptions which had been forgotten or allowed to lapse within the Christian West. So when Coomaraswamy expressed the view that one had to have command of the relevant classical languages in order to understand the Oriental doctrines, he was speaking in isolation, before most of the published work of the above named men. The works of these latter, along with those of Coomaraswamy (including these letters), can be of inestimable value for anyone who sincerely wishes to effect “. . . a *metanoia*, a thorough change of mind. Insensibly, those things which our world rejects [can] become the standard by which we judge it”.

We should note also that Coomaraswamy was on shaky ground when he occasionally asserted, in effect, that any object can be beautiful in its kind; eg, a mechanical device, even a bomb. To accept this would be tantamount to the denial of beauty as a divine quality and to confuse it with mere artifice and prettiness. But on the basis of the Doctor's own inclusive statements on art and on the nature of beauty, we believe that the above views do not represent his final and considered positions but rather were adopted *ad hoc* for the purpose of making a particular point.

A few more extensive comments are in order as regards missionary activity\*, which often irritated Coomaraswamy and which he often castigated. But Christianity, like Buddhism and Islam in this, is inherently a missionary religion. This stems from the post-Resurrection injunction of Christ to “go. . . unto all nations. . .”, and the resulting attitude typified in St Paul's “woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel”—positions which, until quite recently, have been considered as defining the essential Christian attitude in these matters. The rest is a question of qualification, opportunity and sincerity. Approximately from the time of World War II, however, the character of Christian missionary activity has undergone fundamental changes. Power relationships are no longer the same. Peoples

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level of the originals; so nothing said here should be taken to imply that competence in the original languages is not a great boon in the effort at understanding.

\* These remarks may serve also as indirect comment on the presumed superiority of all things Western, Christianity included, and how any basis—even illusory—for these presumptions has evaporated.



among whom missionaries most often work now live in their own nation-states and, needless to say, exercise their own controls according to their own lights. The example of a decadent West—Europe and America—has served to undercut the assumptions of superiority and *mission civilisatrice* which in the past have undeniably been elements in missiology, and which have been attitudes often shared by the “natives”. More fundamentally the rationale of missions has changed from within. In Catholic circles, the views of Teilhard de Chardin and his all-encompassing evolutionism have become a major influence. Similar outlooks are to be found in Protestant missiology, along with the widespread view that those to whom missionaries are sent have themselves something to teach the missionaries and those who support the missionary enterprise.\* There is a frank recognition of the part previously played by “cultural imperialism”, and a deemphasis on conversion. The modern missionary takes man as he is found, including his cultural ambience; no more of “the missionary is first of all a social reformer”. The whole man, as currently conceived to be sure, must be taken into consideration, soul and body; and the latter is taken to include economics and politics. What, then, of the basic motives for missionary activity? For it is recognized that the old motives have been seriously weakened since World War II and especially since Vatican II. One current motive is charity, but a charity humanistically conceived, more along the lines of *caring* and obviously something far removed from an informed *caritas*. Another motive is that of witnessing. And yet another is the search for truth which, of course, entails much dialogue—that interminable sink of humanistic endeavors. Obviously, not all these points are ill-taken; but it is equally obvious that none of them, singly or combined, can be of such a nature as to set peoples afire for Christianity. And this apparent digression will have served its purpose if it has suggested something of the fatal moderateness and tepidity of a Christianity that has lost touch with its most fundamental roots; a Christianity, indeed, that is busying itself in auto-destruction, to adopt an expression of Paul VI. We would do well, as we reflect on Coomaraswamy’s

\* It is interesting that these views have been put forward principally by a Dutch Catholic member of a missionary order, the White Father, Henri Nouwen.

attitudes to call to mind Christ's own views on proselytizing (Mt xxiii, 15). In any case, one can conceive of few peoples more in need of genuine religion than those of modern Western nations.

In principle, there is nothing lacking to Christianity. Even though outwardly it has been primarily *bhaktic* or devotional in character, Christianity contains legitimate and essential elements which Coomaraswamy, for one, has compared to "an Upanishad of Europe". Christianity is a full Revelation, addressed to a particular sector of humanity; our task, as "workers of the eleventh hour" is to fathom its profundities once again insofar as this may be possible and, hopefully, sense something of That which led St Paul to exclaim: "O the depth of the riches, the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" (Rom xi, 33).

Our purpose, then, in offering these letters is to help reintroduce Western readers and especially Christians to their own proper Tradition, to point out to them again the well-springs of our faith, and to offer some small glimmer of the splendour of Truth. For those whose interest is comparative religion, it is hoped that they may find reflected in these letters both the need for strict personal honesty and a recognition of the fact that because a common Truth is to be found in the several traditional forms, this Truth must therefore be lived all the more deeply in one's own. Lastly, it is hoped that those who look eastwards (not always an illegitimate option) will seek proper authority and ignore the proselytizers of a neo-Hinduism, a chic-Zen, or a deracinated Sufism. And we invite all who will to reflect on the ways of Heaven, which are often mysterious or at least dimly understood: a man who was in many respects superior to the exclusivisms which separate and define the several religions, even a Hindu, had the remarkable function of serving as an able defender of the integral Christian faith. The Holy Spirit, who moves as and where He will, breathes across boundaries which in normal times and with good reason separate the different Traditions. In our indigence, let us not be too proud to accept grace and help from whatever quarter they may be proffered.

ALVIN MOORE, JR  
RAMA POONAMBULAM COOMARASWAMY

## THE LETTERS

TO STANLEY NOTT

February 15, 1945

Dear Mr Nott:

. . . The problem of the "spiritual East" versus the "material West" is very easily mistaken. I have repeatedly emphasized that it is only accidentally a geographic or racial problem. The real clash is of traditional with antitraditional concepts and cultures; and that is unquestionably a clash of spiritual and ideological with material or sensate points of view. Shall we or shall we not delimit sacred and profane departments of life? I, at any rate, will not. I think if you consider Pallis' *Peaks and Lamas* you will see what I mean. I think it undeniable that the *modern* world (which happens to be still a western world, however fast the East is being westernized) is one of "impoverished reality", one *entleert* of meaning, or values. Our contemporary trust in Progress is a veritable *fideism* as naive as is to be found in any past historical context.

Very sincerely,

Mr Stanley Nott, Harpenden, Herts, England, was in correspondence with Dr Coomaraswamy about a new edition of *The Dance of Shiva* which Faber and Faber, London, was considering.  
*Peaks and Lamas*, see Bibliography.

TO RICHARD ETINGHAUSEN

August 16, 1942

Dear Richard:

Very many thanks for your kind words. I am glad of the last sentence in the first paragraph. As you realize, I have never tried to have a "style" but only to state things effectively—so that I was very pleased, too, once when Eric Gill wrote to me:



"You hit bloody straight, bloody hard, and bloody often."

I think our valuation of "literature" (and of art generally) is now fetishistic, the symbol being more important to us than its reference: this is just what the Sufi calls idolatry.

With best regards,

Dr Richard Ettinghausen was Director of the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

Eric Gill, well known Catholic writer and artist; see Introduction above. For an understanding of the word *Sufi* the reader is referred to the writings of Frithjof Schuon (see Appendix A) and the *Kashf al-Mahjub* by Ali bin Uthman al-Hujwiri (see Bibliography).

TO MRS MARGARET F. MARCUS

undated

Dear Margaret:

What impresses me about contemporary education is the vacuity of the result, and above all, the isolation produced: it is the almost invariable result that Plato, Dante, the Gospels, Rumi, the Upanishads, Lao Tzu, *etc*, no longer mean anything to the college product who is brought up to be an "aesthete" (euphemistically, an "aesthetician") so that all these things are just "literature" for him, and he never puts his teeth into them, but remains a provincial.

Our present chaotic condition is primarily a chaotic state of mind, and only secondarily a chaotic state of morals. Please note, I am not talking of you in particular; and that there are some exceptions, some who "survive" a college education is certain. What I despise is the so-called "intellectual honesty" that makes college men "unbelievers"; Sheldon calls this "honesty" by its right name, "cowardice".

In every procedure, faith must precede experience; as in Buddhism, a man has only the right to be called "faithless" when he has verified the outcome by acting accordingly; then he has no need of "faith" and is explicitly "no longer a man of faith." Faith is an aristocratic virtue; as an old gloss of Plato remarks, "unbelief is for the mob", skepticism is very "easy".

This is not merely a religious position. The greater part of all

our everyday actions rest on faith. We have faith that the sun will rise tomorrow (any serious scientist will tell you that we do not *know* it will), we act accordingly, and when tomorrow comes, we verify the expectation. . . . Some (like Traherne, Buddhist Arhats, *etc*) claim to have achieved this "felicity" or "eudaimonia" (as Aristotle, *etc*, call it), which all religions are agreed in regarding as man's final aim. Traherne also called it *superhuman* virtue for which all should strive. If you don't want it, that is all right, but you cannot call it unattainable unless you have practised what those who claim to have attained it taught; just as you can't know that  $2H + O = H_2O$  until you have made the experiment (until then you believe your teacher). If you don't want it, so be it; but this very not wanting excludes you from any sympathetic understanding of the greater part of the world's literature which has to do with the quest.

It is not intellectual honesty, but pride, that makes the college man not want. You "believe" in yourself; but for the real value of this "self" *vide* Jung and Hadley and others of your own trusted psychologists who affirm, as the religious philosophies do, that the first *sine qua non* for happiness is to have got rid of this belief in one's own individuality or personality (our "great possessions"). I may still be "selfish"; but that only represents a failure to live up to what I know, *viz*, that my personality is *nothing* but a causally determined process, and of absolutely mortal essence, subject to all the ills that "flesh" is heir to. For Jung, just as for the religious philosophies, there is something else beyond this brainy "individuality"—a Self around which the inflated Ego revolves, much as the earth revolves around the Sun (his own words). Nowadays, nothing is taught of Self-knowledge, but only of Ego-knowledge; and for Jung, the inflated Ego was the root cause of the late war. I cite him so much only because the college man has so much "faith" in him.\*

The "isolation" I spoke of makes of modern man what Plato calls a "playboy", "interested in fine colors and sounds", but "ignorant of beauty". One might say that aestheticism (literally, *sentimentality*, being at the mercy of one's feelings as recommended by Bentham) is a subjection which Plato defined as "ignorance"—and this is the disease of which the current crisis is a symptom; the disease equally of contemporary Christianity and of contemporary skepticism (between which there is not much difference). All this works out in Utopian-



ism, the notion of a future millenium (just around the corner, if only . . .) to be achieved by the improvement of institutions. Religion has no such illusions; religion is not in this sense "futuristic", but asserts that felicity is attainable, never *en masse*, but at any time by the individual here and now. "But of course, that looks like work", and the appearance is not deceptive; it is very much easier to sit back and rely on "progress".

You might look at Erwin Schrödinger's book *What Is Life?* No doubt you have seen Zimmer's *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*—now out.

Affectionately,

\* Elsewhere, AKC expressed grave reservations about the views of Carl G. Jung, eg, on page 10.

Mrs Margaret F. Marcus, Cleveland, Ohio.

Thomas Traherne, *Centuries of Meditations*, see Bibliography.

Sheldon, Wilmot Herbert, Department of Philosophy, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

TO MRS MARGARET F. MARCUS

April 29, 1946

Dear Margaret:

I send the Puppet paper, also the booklet of lectures which you may find helpful when you talk about India. But you know, I always have the feeling that you look at these things only with interest as "curiosities", and that metaphysics doesn't have any real significance for you. It is pretty hard for anyone who has been to college to have any other attitude, I know. And yet, man is *by nature* a metaphysical animal, or if not, just an animal whose concept of the future is limited by time.

We are having a number of different cactus blossoms. I haven't done much in the garden yet—bad weather, and time is not my own!

Someday you must try to tell me *what* interests you in the material I *assemble*: you realize I say nothing, or try to say nothing that can properly be attributed to me individually.

Affectionately,

Mrs Margaret F. Marcus, Cleveland, Ohio.

" 'Spiritual Paternity' and the 'Puppet Complex' " (AKC), *Psychiatry*, VIII, 287-297, 1945; republished in AKC's collection of essays, *Am I My Brother's Keeper?*

TO SIDNEY HOOK

January 17, 1946

Dear Professor Hook:

Many thanks for your kind reply. You will realize, I hope, that what I sent you was the copy of a private letter, and that I would have written in a somewhat different "tone" for publication.

My main point was that the "mystics" (or, I would prefer to say, "metaphysicians") insist upon the *necessity* of moral means if the amoral end is to be reached; hence theirs is a practical way, though a contemplative end. I agree with them (and you) that the end is logically indescribable, other than by negations, of which "a-moral" is but one.

To put it in another way, the end is not *a* value amongst others, but that on which all values depend. If we have not the concept of an end beyond values (+ or -) we are in great danger of making our own relative values into absolutes.

As for Hinduism and Buddhism, Plato and St Thomas Aquinas, you see differences where I see essentially sameness, with differences mainly of local color. However, for this sameness I would go to Eckhart and such works as *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Boehme or Peter Sterry or Ficino rather than to St Thomas (whose *Summa* belongs rather to the exoteric aspect of Christianity). I have done a good deal to illustrate what I call essential "sameness" by correlation of cited contexts, in print, and I have vastly more material collected, eg, my "Recollection, Indian and Platonic", or " 'Spiritual Paternity' and the 'Puppet Complex' ".

Very sincerely,

Sidney Hook, Professor of Philosophy, New York University.

*The Cloud of Unknowing*, see bibliography.

Jacob Boehme, see bibliography.



Peter Steyry, *Platonist and Puritan*, by Vivian de Sola Pinto; see bibliography.  
*The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, by Paul O Kristeller; see bibliography.  
 " 'Spiritual Paternity' and the 'Puppet Complex' ", AKC, in *Psychiatry*,  
 VIII, 1945.

TO MRS C. MORGAN

January 11, 1946

Dear Mrs Morgan:

Right now I cannot find time to go into the Huxley review at length. Let us grant to Sidney Hook that Huxley fails to clarify certain matters. But Hook, who makes this criticism, confuses the matter by mistaking the situation itself. I am referring particularly to the "moral" question which Hook not only approaches as a moralist, but apparently in utter ignorance of the traditional distinction of the moral means and the amoral (not immoral!) end, that of the active from the contemplative life. The normal position is that morality is *essential* to the active life and is prerequisite but only *dispositive* to the contemplative. This is the way St Thomas Aquinas states it: cf *The Book of Privy Counselling*, "when thou comest by thyself, think not what thou shalt do after, but forsake as well good thoughts as evil." Buddhism is notoriously a system in which great stress is laid on ethics; and yet there, too, we find it repeatedly affirmed that the *end* of the road is beyond good *and* evil. Bondage (in the Platonic sense of "subjection to oneself") depends on ignorance, and hence it is only truth that can set you free; there can be no salvation by works of merit, but only by gnosis; but for gnosis, mastery of self is a *prerequisite*.

The point is that one cannot reach the end of the road without "going straight", and "while we are on the way, we are not there." The end of the road, or as it is often spoken of, home, means that there is no more tramping to be done: therefore the words "walking straight" or "deviating" cease to have any meaning for or application to one who has arrived and is at home. We are told to "perfect, even as . . .", and as you will recognize, in whatever is perfected there is no more perfecting to be done. Whether or not perfection is attainable on earth we need not ask; it represents, in any case, the "ideal", and even St Augustine refused to deny the possibility.

Moralism, such as Sidney Hook's is really an unconscious form of Partipassianism—the doctrine that an infinite God is nevertheless himself subject to affections and disaffections, and only "good" in the human sense, which is one that implies at the same time the possibility of "not being good".

I had only time to take up this one point: but generally, I should say Sidney Hook does not know his stuff well enough to criticize Huxley, even though and where the latter may need it.

Very sincerely,

Mrs C. Morgan, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Sidney Hook, Professor of Philosophy, New York University.

The review referred to is in the *Saturday Review*, November 3, 1945.

*Book of Privy Counselling* and *The Cloud of Unknowing*, see Bibliography.

ANONYMOUS

Date uncertain

Dear M:

Your questions are mostly about the *how*, and my answers mostly about the *what* of metaphysics.

What you mean by Metaphysics is not what I mean. College "metaphysics" is hardly anything more than epistemology. Traditional metaphysics is a doctrine about possibility: possibilities of being and not-being, of finite and infinite; those of finite being are embodied mostly in what one calls ontology and cosmology.

The traditional Metaphysics (*Philosophia Perennis* or *Sanatana Dharma*) is not an *omnium gatherum* of "what men have believed", nor is it a *systematic* "philosophy"; it is a consistent and always self-consistent doctrine which can be recognized always and everywhere and is quite independent of any concept of "progress" in material comfort or the accumulation of empirical knowledge; neither opposed to nor to be confused with either of these. It is the *meaning* of a world which would otherwise consist only of experiences, "one damn thing after another." Without a principle to which all else is related, an end



to which all else can be ordered, our life is chaotic, and we do not know how or for what to educate. A merely ethical trend is only for our comfort and convenience but does not suffice for illumination.

I can only, for the present, *assert* that the traditional Metaphysics is as much a single and invariable science as mathematics. The proof of this can hardly be found without the discipline of pursuing fundamental doctrines all over the world and throughout the traditional literatures and arts. It is not a matter of opinions of "thinkers". One should rapidly acquire the powers of eliminating the negligible teachers, and that includes nearly all modern "thinkers", the Deweys and Jungs, *etc.*, through whom it is not worth while to search for the few bright ideas to be found here and there. One must be fastidious. Why pay attention, as Plato says, to the "inferior philosophers"?

The One Truth I am speaking of is reflected in the various religions, various just because "nothing can be known except in the mode of the knower" (St Thomas Aquinas). It is in the same sense that the "Ways" appear to differ; this appearance will diminish the further you pursue any one of them, in the same way that the radii of a circle approximate the nearer you get to the center.

Metaphysics requires the most discriminating legal mentality.\* When Eckhart says that man is necessary to God's existence, this is not a boast but a simple logical statement. He is not speaking of the Godhead, but of God as Lord (Jesus), and merely pointing out that we cannot speak of a "lordship" in a case where there are no "servants"; one implies the other. Just as there is "no paternity without filiation"; a man is not a "father" unless he has a child. You won't catch Meister Eckhart out as easily as all that!

The traditional Metaphysics does not deny the possible value of random "mystical experience", but is (like the Roman Catholic Church) suspicious and critical of it because of its passivity.\*

Very sincerely,

\* Whatever Dr Coomaraswamy had in mind in the use of this term (and something of it will be inferred in the course of these letters), it was not

Pharisaism of any kind: his own life and thought are ample proof of that. On the other hand, among the 'laymen' who wrote to AKC, many were lawyers, men trained in disciplined thinking, respect for evidence and in some measure of discrimination and discernment.

\* Although the copy of this letter available to the editors ends rather abruptly, we think it well worth inclusion because of its content.

TO MRS GRETCHEN WARREN

December 11, 1944

Dear Gretchen:

In such a comparison my preference would be for St Augustine; I would explain this most briefly by saying that Augustine is still a Platonist, Aquinas an Aristotelian, and much nearer to being a "rationalist". If Aquinas treats more fully of the "whole of man" that is because the ages of formation had passed and it was time for such encyclopaedic treatment; the difference is something like that between Hinduism and Buddhism in emphasis. No scheme of life is complete in which both norms are not recognized and allowed for, namely the social and the unsocial (*not* antisocial), Martha and Mary. I think it is an error to say that Augustine had a "morbid terror of beauty". He seems to me to share fully in the normal Christian admiration of the beauty of the Cosmos, as sanctioned by God's own appreciation of his handiwork in Genesis—"saw that it was very good" (cf Aug., *Confessions* XIII, 28). He says also, "there is no evil in things, but only in the sinner's use of them" (*De doc. Chr.* III, 12). He says that while things please us because they are beautiful, it does not follow that because they please us they are beautiful; some people like deformities (*Lib. de ver. relig.* 59; *De Musica* VI, 36). "An iron style is made by the smith on the one hand that we may write with it, and on the other that we may take pleasure in it; and in its kind it is at the same time beautiful and adapted to our use" (*Lib. de ver. relig.*, 39). He points out that the beautiful is to be found everywhere and in everything, for example in the fighting cock (*De Ordine* I, 25)—a good example, since he would not have approved of cockfighting and yet could see and point out the beauty of the fighting cock. "And this beauty in creatures is the voice of God." There is a



book by K. Svoboda entitled *L'Esthétique de St Augustin*, and also his *De Musica* is very profound.

Affectionately,

Mrs Gretchen Warren, Boston, Massachusetts.

TO ALBERT SCHWEITZER

February 7, 1946

Dear Dr Schweitzer:

Although I have due respect for your fine work in Africa, I have lately come across your book, *Christianity and the Religions of the World*, and would like to let you know that I regard it as a fundamentally *dishonest* work. Buddhism is, no doubt, a doctrine primarily for contemplatives; but you cannot mix up Brahmanism in this respect with Buddhism, because Brahmanism is a doctrine for both actives and contemplatives. What I mean especially by "dishonest" is that, to suit your purposes, you cite the *Bhagavad Gita* where Arjuna is told to fulfil his duty as a soldier, without citing the passage in which others are likewise told to fulfil their vocations as means better than any other of fulfilling the commandment "Be ye perfect. . . ."

This makes quite ridiculous your second paragraph on page 41. I am afraid that most Christians, for some reason obscure to me, find it indispensable to exalt their own beliefs by giving a perverted account of those of others, of which, moreover, they have only a second-hand knowledge derived from the writings of scholars who have been for the most part rationalists, unacquainted with religious experience and unfamiliar with the language of theology. I recommend you spend as much time searching the Scriptures of Brahmanism and Buddhism, in the original languages, as you may have spent on the Scriptures of Christianity in their original languages, before you say anything more about other religions.

Very truly yours,

Albert Schweitzer, German theologian, musicologist and medical mission-

ary, widely influential in Protestant circles in his time  
*Christianity and the Religions of the World*, see Bibliography  
 Albert Schweitzer Jubilee Volume, a *festschrift* to which Dr Coomaraswamy contributed a profound study entitled 'What is Civilization?', for which see Bibliography.

TO GEORGE SARTON

October 7, 1943

Dear Sarton:

Thanks for Schweitzer, I'll return it very soon. I have read most of it and it seems to me a strange mixture of much doing good and much muddled thinking. I don't think he grasps the *weltanschauung* of the ancient (European) world at all; and as for the East, on page 178, line 1 "concern himself solely" and line 18 "after living part of his life in the normal way and founding a family" are inconsistent.

I received the invitation to write for the *festschrift*, but am asked for something "non-technical" and after reading the book, I too feel that the little symbolological paper I had in mind wouldn't interest Schweitzer himself at all. I'm seeing if I can't put together a little note on the intrinsic significance of the word "civilization".

Schweitzer's analysis of colonisation and its effects is good (and tragic), but he feels helpless\* in the face of "world trade" and has no fight in him. He reminds me a little of Kierkegaard, with his groaning and grunting; and with all his defense of "affirmation" is not nearly as positive a person as, say, Eric Gill, for whose last collection of essays I am writing an introduction.

With kindest regards,

\* And yet he despises 'resignation'! On the whole, one of the most exoteric men imaginable. There are many sides of Africa that he seems never to have seen at all; there is no sign that he ever got into more than physical contact with the people. Contrast St George Barbe Baker in *Africa Drums*

George Sarton, Professor of the History of Science, Harvard University, and editor of *Isis*

Albert Schweitzer, *Christianity and the Religions of the World*: see bibliography.



'What Is Civilization?', by AKC in *The Albert Schweitzer Jubilee Volume*, see Bibliography.

St George Barbe Baker, *Africa Drums*; see Bibliography.

Eric Gill, *It All Goes Together*; see Bibliography.

TO MR MASCALL

November 2, 1942

Dear Mr Mascall:

Many thanks for your kind letter. I cannot agree that it is the essence of Christianity to be final and exclusive in any sense except in the sense that any truth must be exclusive of error. With that reservation, it can as much as Hinduism or Islam claim to be final and *conclusive*.

Exclusive, as I said, presumes the existence of error; but it remains to be shown that the other religions are in error, whether about man's last end or the nature of deity. I venture that your knowledge of these other religions is not profound: knowledge of them cannot be that if it is not based on texts in the original, and on thinking and being in their terms. I *do* actually think in both Eastern and Christian terms, Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Pali, and to some extent Persian and even Chinese. I hardly ever deal with any specific doctrine (eg, that of the one essence and the two natures, or that of the light of lights, or "I will draw all men unto me") with reference to one tradition only, but cite from many sources. I doubt if there is any point of essential doctrine that could not be defended as well from Indian as from Christian sources.

I presume that we are liberty, and even bound to use *reason* in defense of any true doctrine. It will be evident, however, that if we are to discuss the possibility of error in either one or both of two given religions, it will be contrary to reason to assume that one of them can be made the standard of judgement for both. That would be to make an *a priori* judgement, and not an investigation at all. A standard must be, by hypothesis, superior to both the parties whose qualifications are under consideration. One comes nearest to possession of such a standard in the body of those doctrines that have been most universally taught by the divine men of all times and peoples. Anything for example, that is true for Plato (whom Eckhart

called "that great priest", and in the same century that *Jīlī*—Moslem saint—had a vision of him "filling all space with light"), the Gospels, Islam, Hinduism and Taoism, I am prepared to regard as true, and rather for me to understand than question. When we have in this way built up a standard of the most important speculative verities, we can proceed to judge of other propositions, in case they are less widely witnessed to, by their consistency or inconsistency with what has been accepted.

In any case, let me say, speaking for Hindus as to Christians, that even if you are not with us, we are with you.

Very sincerely,

Mr Mascall is not further identified, but may have been E. A. Mascall, the prominent Anglican theologian and philosopher.

TO SIGNOR GALVAO

November 15, 1940

Dear Signor Galvao:

It is a pleasure to receive your letter and to hear from an unknown friend.

M. René Guénon had recovered his health last spring and was again contributing to *ET*. The last number I received was that of May 1940. The last letter I received from him was written in June and did not reach me until October!

I have no news of M. Schuon. M. Preau had my ms (on the "Symbolism of Archery"), intended for the 1940 Special No on the "Symbolism of Games", but I have heard nothing from him since the occupation, and do not know if the publication of *ET* can be continued. Yes, the participation of civilians in warfare is quite anti-traditional: it must be shocking to a true soldier, for whom war is a vocation.

I send you one of my publications here. With cordial agreement,

Very sincerely,

Signor Galvao is a Brazilian correspondent of Guenon and AKC.



René Guénon, see Bibliography

Frithjof Schuon, see Bibliography.

ET = *Etudes Traditionnelles*; see Bibliography

"Symbolism of Archery", see Bibliography.

TO SIGNOR GALVAO

October 10, 1941

My dear Signor Galvao:

I am happy to hear from you. *Quand vous écrivez: "Un chrétien, c'est-à-dire, un catholique", je suis en parfait accord de vous!* In view of the Pauline interdiction of the eating of meat offered to idols, it might be considered irregular for a Catholic to eat meat that has been sacrificed to what is (in his opinion) a false god. However, where it is a question of accepting "hospitality", one should ask no questions (Buddhist monks accept whatever is given, even if meat: the responsibility for the killing rests upon the donor). I cannot give an answer to the question about the foundation stone.

I have heard from mutual friends that M. Guénon is well, but I have heard nothing from him directly. The first of the translations (*East and West*, published by Luzac, London) has just appeared. Another book I can recommend to you is Eric Gill's *Autobiography*, published by Devin-Adair, New York.

As for your *prêtre* (*sacerdote*): it is quite permissible for any Catholic to recognize the truth of any particular doctrine taught by a "pagan" philosopher. Indeed, St Thomas himself makes use of the "pagan philosophers" as sources of "intrinsic and probable truth". I have known two devout Catholics, a layman and a learned nun who saw more than this. The former wrote to me that he saw that Hinduism and Christianity amounted to the same thing; while the nun said to me that "I see that it is not necessary for you to be a Catholic." But this is unusual, and with most of my Catholic friends I go no further than to discuss particular doctrines, in connection with which, as they are willing to recognize, exegetical light may be thrown from other than specifically Christian sources.

It is perhaps M. Cuttat, whom I recently had the pleasure to meet, who proposes to publish in Spanish a journal somewhat

like *Etudes Traditionnelles*. I hope that your generosity and other efforts will lead to success. We miss the appearance of ET. For myself, I am endeavoring to publish elsewhere. As you have probably recognized, I do not, like M. Guénon, repudiate the "orientalists" altogether (however, I am fully aware of their crimes in the name of "scholarship") but endeavour to publish what I have to say in the language of "scholarship": on the whole I find a more open minded and rather receptive attitude amongst my colleagues than might have been expected.

I hope to send you several papers, and also my forthcoming book, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government* during this winter.

I do not think it would be possible to obtain any numbers of ET in the USA where it is very little known.

Yours very sincerely,

Signor Galvao is not identified.

ET = *Etudes Traditionnelles*; see Bibliography.

Monsieur Cuttat was a Swiss diplomat with interests similar to those of AKC and René Guénon.

TO SENATOR ERIC O. D. TAYLOR

November 7, 1939

Dear Senator:

I certainly do not regard your letter as an impetiance. Of course, I do not deny that there are foundations as well as pinnacles, and that there are cornerstones in the plural, at the corners. Only in the latter sense it makes no sense to speak of the head of the church as *the* cornerstone (—one asks, "which of the four:"). I should say that Christ is thought of both as foundation and as pinnacle: and that both (not to mention the intervening *stauros*) are *corner* stones in the sense that Eckstein is also diamond. That the axis of the Universe is "adamantine" throughout is universal. As for the other point, I am too familiar with the identity of Christian, Indian *and other* doctrines not to think that Indian metaphysics is *a* key to Christian mysticism. You would surely, with St Thomas



Aquinas, accept the work of "pagan" philosophers as providing "extrinsic and probable proofs", even if you would not admit with Augustine that the one true religion always existed and only came to be called Christianity after the birth of Christ (I am not sure that this Augustinian dictum has been branded as heretical!)

Very truly yours,

Eric O. D. Taylor, Senator from Rhode Island, USA.

Cf AKC's article 'Eckstein' in *Speculum*, XIV, 1939, pp 66-72, on the meaning of 'cornerstone' in Christian symbolism; see Bibliography.

TO SENATOR ERIC O. D. TAYLOR

date uncertain

Dear Sir:

Since writing yesterday I have seen a letter from Erwin Panofsky, of Princeton, in which he says that the interpretation of *lapis in caput anguli* as keystone and not cornerstone, is "indubitably correct" and that late medieval artists almost unanimously represented it accordingly. He sent a photo from a manuscript showing a diamond shaped stone being laid by builders at the *top* of a tower.

Very sincerely,

TO SENATOR ERIC O. D. TAYLOR

undated

Dear Sir,

I think the *old law* would be the *foundation* and the *new law* the keystone of the structure itself. Of course, foundation, connecting *stauros*, and capital would all be adamantine, in Eastern as in Christian symbolism.

AKC

This latter note was in the form of a postcard, and both it and that immediately before relate to the communication that precedes them.

TO BERNARD KELLY

January 14, 1945

Dear Mr Kelly:

To take up your letter of the 1st: the usual complaint is, of course, that the mystics are too otherworldly; you raise the opposite objection. The answers should be long, but briefly, I think one can say that perhaps the problem has been more clearly faced in India, with its conception of the four stages of life—student, householder, retirement, and absolute renunciation—the last is an “anticipated” death (the *sannyasin* becoming what the Sufis call a “dead man walking”) and just as in actual death, so here carrying on of the life of the world is provided by one’s descendents to whom all responsibilities are transmitted, so that one does not die “in debt” to the world. Thus both an ordinary and the extraordinary norm are provided for.

I think this is also really the case in Christianity; where, however, the notion of “service” has almost overwhelmed that of “man’s last end”. Since man’s entelechy, his perfection, to realize which is enjoined upon him, consists in the purely contemplative life or vision of God, it is impossible to suppose that this life has been forbidden him; and there are, in fact, orders, like the Trappist, in which this life of contemplation is followed without any obligation of “service”.

It can only be said that the mystic is acting “selfishly” when there really remains in him a “self”. From this point of view even in India, the adoption of a purely contemplative way of life is condemned where there is what is called “premature aversion”. Until one is a *jivan-mukta* (freeman) really, until one can say “I live, yet not ‘I’, but . . .”<sup>\*</sup> one is clinging to rights and has duties, and however great one’s enlightenment, “ought” as Plato says, to “return to the cave”, though in another-minded way than is theirs who have never left it.

A few points: “Service” in the sense of neighbourliness is a matter of prudence, not of art. The manufacturer, pretending to “serve” the community, is all wet, so to say; the duty of the maker of things is not to those who will use them, but to the things, to see to it that they are as good as he can make them. Thus the good of mankind is served by the artist indirectly. At



the same time every artist is also a man, and as such has social responsibilities like any consumer's. Again, the truly freeman is free, amongst other ways, to be engaged in any kind of activity, and may not necessarily adopt a homeless life, though it is far more difficult to be free in company than in solitude; freedom has nothing really to do with what one does, but with the attitude one has towards things; if one can "act without acting", without attachment to any consequences, one can be as free that way as in a monastic cell. For that, one must be able to live always in the eternal now, letting the dead bury the dead and taking no thought for the morrow. In such a case, one may seem to be "serving", as if one had duties, but is, in fact, simply being, entirely unaffected by the acts which are really no longer one's own (so in St Paul's conception of liberty, as distinguished from being "under the law").

Now as to Fate. Fate corresponds to causality and is not the same as Providence. In the orthodox teachings, fate "lies in the dreaded causes themselves" and has much in common with "heredity". Providence is the timeless vision (no more foresight than hindsight, but now-sight) of the operation of secondary causes in the world where nothing happens by chance. To have no Fate would be to have no character; and it is in this sense that one uses the word un-fortunate, one who has not the share or lot in life that is his due.

I can hardly speak too highly of Pallis' book *Peaks and Lamas* which is the best introduction to Mahayana Buddhism and its working out in life that I know. There is a fair amount of literature on Tibetan doctrine. One of the best introductions is the novel by the Lama Yongden called *Mipam* (publ. John Lane, 1938). Some of the systematic books include Evans-Wentz, *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrine* and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (both publ. by Oxford); Bacot and Woolf, *Three Tibetan Mystery Plays* (Broadway Translations, Dutton, N. Y.); Bacot, *Le Poete tibétain Milarepa* (Paris, 1925). There are also many works on Mahayana, not specifically Tibetan.

Write again if you think I can be of further help.

Very sincerely,

\* "... Christ liveth in me." Galatians ii, 20.

Bernard Kelly was a Catholic layman who lived in Windsor, England, with

whom AKC corresponded extensively. Well trained in Catholic theology, he was able to read both Latin and Greek with facility. He undertook the study of Sanskrit in order to better understand Eastern religion. He wrote occasionally for the English Dominican journal *Blackfriars*. He and his wife had six children and he supported his family on the modest income of a bank clerk.

TO WALTER SHEWRING

March 4, 1936

Dear Walter Shewring:

Very many thanks for your kind letter. I am more than appreciative of your corrections. I can only say that I am conscious of fault in these matters. It is no excuse to say that checking references and citations is to me a wearisome task. I am sometimes oppressed by the amount of work to be done and try to do too much too fast . . . in certain cases I have not been able to see proofs. . . .

It is only in the period of the 5th–13th century AD that East and West are really of one heart and mind. A Catholic friend of mine here, who has been writing articles on extremism—urging a *no compromise* relationship between the Church and the world—tells me that I (who am not formally a Christian) am the only man who seems to see his point! What I am appalled by is that even Catholics who *have* the truth if they would only operate with it wholeheartedly, are nearly all tainted with modernism.\* I mean have reduced religion to *faith and morals*, leaving speculation and *factibilia* to the profane and Mammon. Christianity is nowadays presented in such a sentimental fashion that one cannot wonder that the best of the younger generation revolt. The remedy is to present religion in the intellectually difficult forms: present the challenge of a theology and metaphysics that will require great effort to understand at all. . . .

One word about the errors. I would like to avoid them altogether of course. But one cannot take part in the struggle for truth without getting hurt. There is a kind of “perfectionism” which leads some scholars to publish nothing, because they know that nothing can be perfect. I don’t respect this. Nor do I care for any aspersions that may reflect upon me



personally. It is only "for the good of the work to be done" that one must be as careful as possible to protect oneself. . . . I am so occupied with the task that I rarely have leisure to enjoy a moment of personal realisation. It is a sort of feeling that the harvest is ripe and the time is short. However, I am well aware that all *haste* is none the less an error. I expect to improve.

Affectionately,

\*Note that Dr Coomaraswamy recognized this deadly infection thirty years before it was remanifested during and following the Second Vatican Council.

Walter Shewring, Assistant Master at Ampleforth College, England, and sometime Charles Oldham Scholar at Corpus Christi College, Oxford University.

TO WALTER SHEWRING

February 27, 1938

My dear Walter Shewring:

A very large number of Hindus, very many million certainly, daily repeat from memory a part, or in some cases, even the whole of the *Bhagavad Gita*. This recitation is a chanting, and no one who has not heard Sanskrit poetry thus recited, as well as understanding it, can really judge of it as poetry. To me the language is both noble and profound. The style is quite simple and without ornament, like that of the best of the Epic, and of the Upanishads; it is not yet the ornamented classic style of the dramas. On the whole I think the judgements of the professional scholars are to be discounted, for many reasons. Personally, I should think a good comparison, poetically, would be with the best of the medieval Latin hymns.

The trouble with almost all Sanskritists is that all they know is the language. For the rest, they are inhibited in all sorts of ways. Their attitude to Dionysius or Eckhart would be the same as to the *Bhagavad Gita* or the Upanishads: they would say "very interesting, and sometimes quite exalted in tone, but on the whole irrational." I do not see how anyone who cannot

read John, or Dionysius, or much of Philo or Hermes or Plotinus with enthusiasm can read the Upanishads with enthusiasm; and in fact, such introductions as men like Hume write to their very imperfect translations are really quite naive. It is no use to pretend that you can really know these things by reading them as "literature". That they are "literature" is the accident, no doubt, but not their essence. . . . The so-called "objectivity" of science is very often nothing but a kind of aloofness that defeats its own ends. Who can be said to have understood Scripture or Plainsong whose eyes have never been moistened by either?

Affectionately,

Walter Shewring, Assistant Master, Ampleforth College, England.  
The *Bhagavad Gita*, most popular of the Hindu Scriptures, is recognized as a recapitulation of them; it forms part of the epic poem, the *Mahabharata*. Robert Ernest Hume, translator of and commentator upon the Upanishads; see his *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* in the Bibliography.

ANONYMOUS

April 5, 1947

Dear Mr . . .

I had sent these excerpts on "grief" to Mrs M . . . instead of to you direct, since you had not raised the question with me directly. The actual words, "Every meeting is a meeting for the first time, and every parting is forever" are mine, but not mine as regards their meaning which depends on the quite universally recognized principle of uninterrupted change or flux; nothing stops to be, but has "become" something else before you have had time to take hold of it. This applies notably to the psycho-physical personality or individuality which modern psychologists and ancient philosophers alike are agreed is not an entity but a postulate formed to facilitate easy reference to an observed sequence of events; those who attribute entity to individuals are "animists", and also "polytheists" (since 'I' and 'is' are expressions proper only to God). *Duo sunt in homine*; which of these two were you most attached to, the mortal or the immortal?

Every heart-attracting face that thou beholdest.

The sky will soon remove it from before thy eyes;  
Go, and give thy heart to One who, in the circle of  
existence,

Has always remained with thee and will so continue  
to be.

That Self is dearer than a son. . . . He who regards the  
Self

as dear, what he holds dear is, verily, not perishable.

You speak of your metaphysics as Western. You might just as well call your mathematics or chemistry Western. Such distinctions cannot be made. The basic metaphysical propositions—eg, *nihil agit in seipsum*—have nothing to do with geography. Neither has the traditional doctrine condemning excessive grief for the dead, both for one's own sake and because such grief is an *abuse* of the dead:

O who sits weeping on my grave,  
And will not let me sleep?

The brief remainder of this letter is separately folded and enclosed in order that you may, if you wish, destroy it unread; I only say this because, if you do read it, you will not like it.

Biography is a rather ghoulish and dispicable trade in any case. If your son would have wished to have his private life exhibited, he must have had a full measure of self conceit. If, as I suppose, he would very much rather *not* be treated as Exhibit A, then you are simply indulging your own masochistic delight in your own misery, at his expense, and that of any other helpless human beings whose lives may have been intimately involved with his. If such an unreserved biography as you propose has never been done before, that may well be because hitherto no one has been shameless enough to do such a thing. It seems to me that neither your son nor his still living friends will be able easily to forgive you, and I dare say, in turn, you will not forgive me!

Yours sincerely,



TO S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM

May 1946

Dear Mr Durai Raja Singam:

In reply to your various letters, I enclose some information. I must explain that I am not at all interested in biographical matter relating to myself and that I consider the *modern* practice of publishing details about the lives and personalities of well known men is nothing but a vulgar catering to illegitimate curiosity. So I could not think of spending my time, which is very much occupied with more important tasks, in hunting up such matter, most of which I have long forgotten; and I shall be grateful if you will publish *nothing but the barest facts* about myself. What you should deal with is the nature and tendency of my *work*, and your book should be 95 per cent on this. I wish to remain in the background, and shall not be grateful or flattered by any details about myself or my life; all that is *anicca*, and as the "wisdom of India" should have taught you, "portraiture of human beings is *asvarya*." All this is not a matter of modesty, but of *principle*. For statements about the nature and value of my work you might ask the secretary of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Society, Poona (India), and Dr Murray Fowler, c/o G. and G. Merriam Co, Springfield, Massachusetts (USA) to make some statement, as both are familiar with it. I would not mind sending you press reviews of my books, but it would take more time than I have to hunt them up; I have no secretary who would do this sort of thing for me!

Yours sincerely,

S. Durai Raja Singam was a retired teacher in Malaysia who had written to AKC for information in order to write a biography, and who later published in Malaysia a number of works which provide a wealth of biographical information on him.

TO MARCO PALLIS

August 20, 1944

Dear Marco:

I am rather appalled by your suggestion of my writing a book of the nature of a critique of Occidentalism for Indian readers. It isn't my primary function (*dharma*) to write "readable" books or articles; this is just where my function differs from Guénon's. All my willing writing is addressed to the professors and specialists, those who have undermined our sense of values in recent times, but whose vaunted "scholarship" is really so superficial. I feel that the rectification must be at the reputed "top" and only so will find its way into the schools and text books and encyclopaedias. In the long run the long piece on the "Early Iconography of Saggitarius", on which I have been engaged for over a year, with many interruptions, seems to me more important than any direct additions to the "literature of indictment".

When I go to India, it will be to drop writing, except perhaps translation (of Upanishads, etc); my object in "retiring" being to *verify* what I already "know".

AKC

Marco Pallis, London, England, author of *Peaks and Lamas* and other works (see Bibliography) which have earned him a reputation as one of the premier interpreters of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan culture of this century. René Guénon, Cairo, Egypt, author of many books and articles on traditional doctrine and symbolism; and an early and powerful voice in defense of tradition and in criticism of the modern world. Unfortunately, 'Early Iconography of Saggitarius' was still incomplete at the time of Dr Coomaraswamy's death in 1947.

TO HERMAN GOETZ

June 15, 1939

Dear Dr Goetz:

There is one other point in your article that I might remark upon. You connect my change of interest from art history to

metaphysics with age and no doubt that is in a measure true, though I would perhaps rather say "maturity" than "age". However, I would also like to explain that this was also a natural and necessary development arising from my former work in which the iconographic interest prevails. I was no longer satisfied with a merely descriptive iconography and had to be able to explain the *reasons* of the forms; and for this it was necessary to go back to the Vedas and to metaphysics in general, for there lie the seminal reasons of iconographic development. I could not, of course, be satisfied with merely "sociological" explanations since the forms of the traditional societies themselves can only be explained metaphysically.

With kindest regards,

Dr Herman Goetz, well known German art historian and translator of AKC's *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (see Bibliography) into German.

TO MISS ADE DE BETHUNE

June 15, 1939

My dear Miss De Bethune:

The style of my articles to which you refer is determined by various considerations, and primarily by the nature of the rather complex, though relatively small audience they reach. Mr René Guénon writes, in spite of all his learning, as simply as possible and can do this more often than I can because he rejects the academic "Orientalists" altogether. I am on the other hand a professional "Orientalist". I decided long ago not to reject but, so to speak, to work within the fold. But as I have to put forward the real meaning of doctrines (eg, regarding "Reincarnation") which academic Orientalists have generally misunderstood, I must do so in an orthodox manner, and justified by many references since these Orientalists are not interested in the Truth, but in what men have said." Then again, I always want to make it clear that I am not putting forward any new or private doctrines or interpretations; and the use of quotations is valuable here. I am also impressed by the concordance, often amounting to verbal identity, of Western and Eastern scriptural



pronouncements and therefore enjoy weaving a logical tissue in which each echoes the other in a sort of harmony.

An article in the 1939 Spring No. of *The American Scholar* on "Vedanta and Western Tradition" is entirely without references, tho' not without quotations.

The use of Sanskrit is partly necessitated by the fact that most of my articles appear in the technical oriental journals; but also by the fact that a part of my audience is Indian, and for them the use of a well known Sanskrit term often gives precise value to what might be an unfamiliar English expression. I quote from St Thomas Aquinas a good deal because most of what I need can be found there, and to quote from him is an *economy of argument* because he stands for Roman Catholics as an *a priori*, altho' not absolute authority. In any case, I regard myself not as an author, not as a literary man, but as an exegete and my only object is to state what is to be said as unmistakably as possible.

In the lecture now in press (Stevens) you will be interested in a citation from Asvaghosa very closely paralleling Dante's affirmation of his *practical* purpose.

I am glad you mentioned the question of sin. Art itself is not of course governed by moral considerations, but the artist's and the patron's *will* is or should be so governed and it cannot too much be emphasized that there is a point at which "love of art" becomes the sin of luxury.

On the question of "last" and "ultimate", I agree. Eternity is not an *everlasting duration*, but an *eternal now*. Hence the connection of "suddenness" with the Sanctus and the symbolism of "lightning". Cf the scholastic tendency to treat *in principio* not as "in the beginning" (temporally), but as "in the principle", ie, In Him "through whom all things were made."

With kind regards,

Miss Ade de Bethune, Newport, Rhode Island, USA, American Catholic artist and author of *Work*, published by John Stevens, Newport, Rhode Island.

"The Vedanta and the Western Tradition", *The American Scholar*, VIII, 1939.

TO PORTER SARGENT

March 19, 1945

Dear Mr Sargent:

As I mentioned before, I am afraid our points of view are far apart. I am in agreement with nearly everything said, as I think so well, by Mr Beck, and with a very great part of the whole Scholastic tradition. I am not a Jesuit, and can only call myself a follower of the *philosophia perennis*, or if required to be more specific, a Vedantin. I am a doctor of science and see no conflict between religion and science, when both are rightly defined; on this subject I have written in *Isis* and have another article forthcoming there.

The philosophy I follow is equally valid for this world and the other; it is one that gives a meaning to life and to all activities here and now. I cannot agree with you that it concerns only the *post mortem* states of being, though it would seem that these would last longer than our present one. In my writing I never fail to relate philosophy to life. I might call your attention to the fact that the tradition I am speaking of, and modern positivism are agreed on one matter at least, viz, that our human "personality" is not a being, but only a process. The tradition differs from positivism in maintaining that, nevertheless, the conviction of being that all of us have is valid in itself, however invalid if connected with our mutable personality. It is only to this being that immortality is predicated. Nothing of course can be regarded as "immortal" that is not immortal *now*.

Yours very sincerely,

Mr Porter Sargent, "Yankee individualist, publisher, authority on non-public schools, writer and sometime poet" (from a review of his book), was the author of a book called *War and Education*, 1944.

"Eastern Wisdom and Western Knowledge", AKC, *Isis*, Part 4, 1943; and "Gradation and Evolution", *Isis*, 1944.

TO PROFESSOR THE HONORABLE EMILE SCHAUB-KOCH

April 28, 1941

My dear Professor Schaub-Koch:

I am greatly honored by your letter of March 17. I have sent you separately my *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, and also a series of reprints from various magazines. I look forward to your large book on Buddhist Iconography with much interest. When I received your letter I was just then engaged in writing a short article on "Some Sources of Buddhist Iconography" (especially the flame on a Buddha's head, and the representation of the Buddha as a pillar or tree of fire).

I am highly appreciative of your proposal of myself for the honorary membership of the Coimbra Academy, and shall regard this as a high honour. For your convenience I may mention that I am a correspondent of the Archeological Survey of India, Vice-President of the India Society (London), and an Honorary Member of the Vrienden der Asiatischen Kunst and of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, etc. I have also been a Vice-President of the American Oriental Society; and am a Doctor of Science of London University. I only mention these matters in case you may wish to supply this information to your friend Count de Costo-Lobo who is to make the nomination.

I shall hope to hear of the safe arrival of the papers I have sent, and to hear from you again.

With my best wishes for the successful continuation of your valuable researches, I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

Professor the Honorable Schaub-Koch, Geneva, Switzerland

*Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, see Bibliography.

'Measures of Fire', *O Instituto*, Coimbra, Portugal, 1942.



TO GEORGE SARTON

November 4 (year not indicated, but presumably 1934)

My dear Sarton:

Thanks for your review of *Transformation . . . in Isis*, and the kind words. I must, however, make two observations. First, a minor matter—I am not, or only to a small extent (in so far as I know the Sinhalese language) a “Sinhalese” (I do not like this spelling!) scholar. My father was a Tamil. A native of Ceylon as such is called a Ceylonese. Second, you must not give me credit for the passage you approve of, in quite the way you do—I *am* “dogmatic”, in the technical as well as in the pejorative sense of the word, according to which latter sense you employ it. I regard the truth, in other words, as a matter of certainty, not of opinion. I am never expressing an opinion or any personal view, but an orthodox one; I cannot say “I think”, or “it seems to me”. As to the intrinsic rightness of all styles: this only holds from the world-picture point of view as a whole, in which the black shadows are as necessary as the high lights; the way to that divine and impartial vision is not by persuading oneself that black is white, however, but by recognizing black for black and white for white. All that you call “humanism” is from my (traditionally orthodox) point of view, “black”; and very far from what is traditionally understood by “human nature” which “has nothing to do with time.” So I *am* just as hopeless a case as you were half inclined to make me out!

Very sincerely,

George Sarton, professor of the history of science, Harvard University.  
*The Transformation of Nature in Art*, AKC. see Bibliography

TO HERMAN GOETZ

January 17, 1947

Dear Dr Goetz:

Many thanks, in the first place, for writing an article for my *festschrift*. Mr Iyer sent me a copy, and I took great pleasure in

reading it, and agree in the main, though perhaps not with every word. I think credit is due to Dr Kramrisch also for her work on Deccan painting, in which she emphasizes the Gujarati elements. Secondly, for your letter of 16th October, which only just arrived! As to this letter: I think you still somewhat misunderstand my position. I fully agree that the Kali Yuga is a necessary phase of the whole cycle, and I should no more think it could be avoided than I could ask the silly question, "Why did God allow evil in the world?" (one might as well ask for a world without ups and downs, past and future, as to ask for a world without good *and* evil). On the other hand, I feel under no obligation to acquiesce in or to praise what I judge to be evil, or an evil time. Whatever the conditions, the individual has to work out his own salvation; and cannot abandon judgement, and be overcome by popular catchwords. I feel, therefore, at liberty to describe the world as is, to mark its tendencies. I see the worst, but I need not be a part of it, however much I must be in it; I will only be a part of the better future you think of, and of which there are some signs, as there must be even now if it is ever to become.

One of our very best men here recently remarked that this "American world is not a civilization, but an 'organized barbarism' ". I can agree; but what is more distressing is that of all the hundreds of Indian students who are now coming here, the great majority are nothing but *disorganized* barbarians, what you might call cultural illiterates. This produces a very strange impression on the really cultured Americans. . . . The modern young Indian (with exceptions) is in no position to meet the really cultured and spiritual European. I feel an interest, therefore, in the "state of education" in India. I can't help feeling sorry for Nehru, who "discovered India" so late; and at Jinnah, who is not a Moslem in any but a political sense. I regret the spread in India of the class distinctions that are so characteristic of the Western "democracies". I would like to see the caste system intensified, especially so as regards the Brahmins, who should be demoted if they don't fill the bill; should be made *Vaisyas* if they go in for money-making, and *Sudras* when they become engineers. This does not mean that I don't think anyone should make money or engines, but that those who do should rank accordingly; in which respect my position is as much Platonic as Indian.

*"Down a steep place into the sea"*

MATTHEW VIII: 32

"As the tyrant delights when he can torment men, and spend their sweat in show and luxury, in foolish strange attire and behaviour, and ape the fool; so do also the devils in hell . . . He who sees a proud man sees . . . the devil's servant in this world; the devil does his work through him . . . He thinks himself thereby fine and important, — and is thereby in the sight of God only as a fool, who puts on strange clothing and takes to himself animal forms"

JACOB BENJAMIN, *Six Theosophic Points*,  
VI: 36-8

"The idea of Progress arose in the eighteenth century from the belief that man had waited long enough and that it was impossible to expect God to do anything to alleviate his sufferings or bring about the triumph of good . . .

"In material things there has been 'progress'; there has been progress in investigation, in the amount of knowledge available, in the speed at which we can move, in the rate of production of goods, in centralization, in the factorization of education, in the power and speed of destruction, in the power of Mammon, in the loss of individual freedom, in the number of deaths on the road, in the decline of wisdom before the increase of knowledge, in the decline of true learning before the mere accumulation of facts and the multiplication of philosophies, in the chaos of our industrial, economic, social and political order . . .

"If there has ever emerged an anti-Christ in history, it is 'the idea of Progress'"

F. W. BUCKLER

"Theology surrendered to ethics, ethics to economics, and man followed suit from a spiritual being to an economic animal"

H. J. MASSINGHAM

"Whenever the timber trade is good, permanent famine reigns in the Ogowe region"

ALBERT SCHWEITZER



Progress: by Denis Tegetmeier, in *Eric Gill Unholy Trinity*, London, Dent, 1942.



Above all, I am not a reformer or a propagandist; I don't "think for my self"; I spend my time trying to understand some things that I regard as immutable truths; in the first place, for my own sake, and secondly for that of those who can make use of my results. For me, there are certain axioms, principles, or values beyond question; my interest is not in thinking up new ones, but in the application of these that are.

You say you cannot see an ugly, only a tragic picture. I disagree with that, because I cannot see "tragedy" except in heroic conflict; where one simply drifts with the current and merely shouts "Progress", I see no possibility of a tragic *rasa*, but only ugliness.

Very sincerely,

Dr Herman Goetz, popular German art historian resident in India; cf letter, p 31.

Dr Stella Kramrisch, Curator of Indian Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art and sometime professor of Indian art at Calcutta University; author of *A Survey of Painting in the Deccan* and *The Indian Temple*, major studies in the art and architecture of India.

The AKC *festschrift* was published under the title *Art and Thought*; see Bibliography.

*Kali Yuga* or 'age of strife', which marks the terminal phase of the present human cycle in the Hindu theory of cyclic time; for a discussion of this concept, see René Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, London, 1942.

*Vaisya* and *sudra*, the lower two of the four traditional Hindu castes; for a further discussion, see AKC, *The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society*, Orientalia, New York, 1946.

*Rasa*, Sanskrit for flavour or taste; an important concept in Hindu aesthetics.

TO FATHER PAUL HENLEY FURFEY, SJ.

November 11, 1937

Dear Father Furfey:

I wonder if you could refer me to any authoritative statements against a translation of the *Bible* into the vernacular? Also to any recent encyclical in which the retention of services in *Latin* is enjoined? I am myself in full agreement with the principle of retaining the hieratic language untranslated

(however much explained by commentaries) but would like to know the Christian authorities.

Very sincerely,

Father Paul H. Fursey, SJ, professor of sociology, Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.

TO MISS ADE DE BETHUNE

June 25, 1940

Dear Miss de Bethune:

I am in full agreement with you on the question of Liturgy (etc) in the vernacular. There are many important reasons for the retention of a "sacred" language. There have been vernaculars (like the Braj dialect of Hindi) which are themselves virtually sacred languages and admirably adapted to the expression of the truth. In the present situation, however, the notable considerations are (1) that modern English is essentially a *secular* language, not at all well adapted to the *façon de penser* of scripture, and (2) the words which once had definite meanings have become materialized and sentimentalized: contrast the medieval meaning of *nature* and the modern, and note the gulf between the philosophical and popular value of *ideal*. For these reasons there *can't* be a translation that is not also a betrayal. It is a perfectly comprehensible situation of course: the humanisation, ie, secularization of scripture accompanies the humanisation of Christ (as Eckhart remarks, Christ's humanity is a hindrance to those who cling to it with mortal pleasure—one might add that "human nature" does not mean the same thing for the Schoolmen as it does for the modern to whom the expressions *forma humanitatis* means nothing).

Very sincerely,

Miss Ade de Bethune, Newport, Rhode Island, USA; see letter, p. 28.

TO MR J. T. TALGERI

August 29, 1946

Dear Mr Talgeri:

In reply to your letter, just received:

All men live by faith, until they have reached an immediate knowledge of reality in which they at first believed. "What is love?" as Rumi says: "Thou shalt know when thou becomest Me."

*A priori*, faith in a given dogma will depend upon the credibility of the witness. Whenever, and that is normally always, the same truths have been enunciated by the great teachers of the world at many times and in many places, there is ground for supposing that one's task is rather to understand and verify what has been said than to question it; and that is just as when a professor of chemistry informs us that  $2H + O = H_2O$ , we take this on faith until we have understood and verified the proposition. To the extent that truths are verified in personal experience, faith is replaced by certainty; in this sense, for example, the Buddhist Arahant is *no longer* a man of faith.

So I believe in the words of the Vedas, Buddha, Socrates, Ramakrishna, Muhammed, Christ and many others, and in the timeless reality to which or to whom—according to the phraseology appropriate in each case—these bear witness. I do not believe that I am this man so-and-so, but that *I am that Man* in this man, and that He is One and the same in all the temporary vehicles that He inhabits and quickens here in His transcendence of them all.

Very sincerely,

Mr Talgeri is not further identified.

TO HELEN CHAPIN

October 29, 1945

Dear Miss Chapin:

I have yours of the 25th and 28th. In the first place, I did *not* mean to say that *you* had sports for an ideal, etc—that was part



of the general criticism of these "latter days". As for caste, I have to prepare a lecture on the "Religious Basis of Hindu Social Order" and will try to go into it there. For the rest, I am only too well aware that "knowing all literature" *can* mean nothing; and at best is only *dispositive* to liberation—though it is that. However, it has been mainly "searching (these) scriptures" that has got me as far along as I am; effecting, that is to say, a measure of liberation from some things. I don't think you need worry about the immorality of doing futile work for a living—it's just a condition imposed by the environment. I am a "parasite" on industrialism, in just the same way, but nevertheless this very situation gives me a position and means to do something worthwhile, I think. Your idea of a Buddhist cooperative seems good to me; and what you say of disposing of your goods ("sell all that thou hast, and follow me") seems the right beginning. But I think you need a little time to consolidate yourself. For another thing, also, to be of the greatest value in such a community you need the resources which would enable you to universalize, so to speak, the orientals with you—not that they have not in their own background "enough for salvation", but that they too are in some danger of the provincialism that is the outstanding quality of American culture—isolationist even intellectually!

Finally, if you thought it worthwhile to make the trip, would you care to spend a week with us? We have no servant, but I am sure you wouldn't mind doing your share of the rather light housework that existence demands. My wife joins me in this invitation.

Sincerely,

Miss Helen Chapin, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, USA.

TO PROFESSOR J. H. MUIRHEAD

August 29, 1935

Dear Professor Muirhead:

I am a good deal relieved by your very kind letter of August

14, for although I spent much time and thought on this article, I still felt dissatisfied with it. What I wanted to bring out was the metaphysical character of Indian doctrine, that it is not a philosophy in the same sense in which this word can be used in the plural; and that the metaphysics of the universal and unanimous tradition, or *philosophia perennis*, is the infallible standard by which not only religions, but still more "philosophies" and "sciences" must be "corrected" (*correction du savoir-penser*) and interpreted.

Now as to the abbreviation: it would be my wish in any case to omit p 8, line 13 up to p 10, line 3 inclusive, and the corresponding footnotes (ie, omit all discussion of the Holy Family, which I would prefer to take up again elsewhere, not as I have done here neglecting the doctrine of the Eternal Birth and "divine nature by which the Father begats", which "nature" is in fact the Magna Mater, the mother of eternity). For the rest I am entirely at your disposal, and rely on you to make such further excisions as you think best, without sending me the Ms, but only the proof in due course.

I may add that all my recent work has tended to show the Rig Vedic (therefore also of course, Upanishad and Brahmana) and neo-Platonic traditions are of an identical import; working this out mainly in connection with ontology and aesthetics, and *de divinis nominibus*. I am contributing an article on "Vedic Exemplarism" to the *James Haughton Woods Memorial Volume* to be published at Harvard University shortly. I have indeed one Catholic friend who admits that he can no longer see any difference between Christianity and Hinduism. I myself find nothing unacceptable in any Catholic doctrine, save that of an *exclusive* truth, which last is not, I believe, a matter of faith (ie, Catholicism assumes its own truth but does not deny truths elsewhere merely because they occur elsewhere, although in practice the individual Catholic does tend to do this). I am not at all interested in tracing possible "influences" of one teaching on another, for example whether or not Jesus or Plotinus may or may not have visited India; the roots of the great tradition are very much older than either Christianity or the Vedas as we have them, although from the standpoint of content both may be called eternal. I hope this may help to make my position clearer, and may be of help to you in editing my Ms. I owe you

many apologies for the troublesome work that must be involved in this.

With renewed thanks,

Very sincerely,

Professor J. H. Muirhead, editor of *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1936, in which AKC's article "The Pertinence of Philosophy" appeared.

'Vedic Exemplarism', AKC's contribution to the *James Haughton Woods Memorial Volume*, Harvard University Press, 1936.

TO PROFESSOR H. G. RAWLINSON

no date given

My dear Rawlinson:

It is a matter of little interest to me whether Gautama or Jesus "lived" historically.\* Gautama himself says "Those who see me in the body or hear me in words, do not see or hear Me. . . . He who sees the *dhamma* sees Me." I do think it necessary to have as a background a knowledge of metaphysics. For a European this means an acquaintance with and verification of the Gospels (at least John), Gnostic and Hermetic literature, Plotinus, Dionysius, Eckhart, Dante. It is of no use to read these simply as literature; if one is not going to get something out of all this, why read at all? If I were not getting solid food out of scholarship, I would drop it tomorrow and spend my days fishing and gardening.

Yours sincerely,

\* The apparently inordinate character of this remark can be seen in better perspective if it is weighed against other AKC statements. For example, commenting in passing on the Gospel formula '. . . that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets', he says that this phrase simply asserts the necessity of an historical eventuation of that which has been ordained by Heaven, which is to say that possibilities of manifestation must be existentially in their proper 'cosmic moment'. For Dr Coomaraswamy, the metaphysical was so overwhelmingly real that, by comparison, historical facts seemed of little importance. This perspective, obviously, is the very antithesis of the popular attitude that sees history as confirming everything,



even the metaphysical. The facts of history, however, and especially of sacred history, are symbolic in the highest degree without this in any way compromising their prescriptive reality on their own level; were it not so, history would be a meaningless chaos. Dr Coomaraswamy was no Docetist, as the fundamental thrust of his writings clearly indicates, whatever may have been the emphasis in a particular context.

H. G. Rawlinson, CIE, formerly with the Ceylon and Indian Education Service, and an art historian.

*Dhamma*, a Pali word (Sanskrit equivalent, *dharma*) meaning "eternal law"; an important concept in both Hinduism and Buddhism. See introductory chapter, "The Buddhist Doctrine" in AKC and I. B. Horner, *The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha*, London, 1948.

TO MR WESLEY E. NEEDHAM

March 14, 1945

Dear Mr Needham:

Many thanks. I'm afraid I feel that Theosophy is for the most part a pseudo- or distorted *philosophia perennis*. The same applies to many "brotherhood" movements. Cf René Guénon's *Le Theosophisme: histoire d'une pseudo-religion* (Didier et Richard, Paris, 1921).<sup>\*</sup> On Guénon, see my article in *Isis*, XXXIV, 1943. I think Plutarch is one of the masters of Comparative Religion, and I have the highest regard for Philo.

Very sincerely,

<sup>\*</sup> This and the other major works of René Guénon are listed in the bibliographical section devoted to him.

Mr. Wesley E. Needham, West Haven, Connecticut, USA.

TO PROFESSOR MUHAMMED HAFIZ SAYYED

August 20, 1947

My dear Professor Muhammed Hafiz Sayyed:

It was a pleasure to receive your kind letter of the 6<sup>th</sup> inst. Your recommendation to visit Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh reminded me of Jahangir and Dara Shikosh:

"Their Vedanta is the same as our Tassawuf." I have the highest regard for the former and I think he ranks with Sri Ramakrishna. I should think it a great privilege to take the dust off his feet. . . . On the other hand I have not found Sri Aurobindo Ghosh's writings very illuminating.

Very sincerely,

Professor Muhammed Hafiz Sayyed, not otherwise identified.

Sri Ramana Maharshi, 1879–1950, great Hindu saint of South India; see *Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, edited by Arthur Osborne, New York, 1972.

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, 1872–1950, Hindu philosopher with strong modernist leanings; his teachings are not considered orthodox.

Jahangir, Mughul emperor (d 1627) noted for his wide cultural interests and his *Tuzuk* (Memoirs), from which the citation in the letter was taken. Dara Shikosh (or Shukoh), notorious among his contemporaries for what they considered his unorthodox religious views; he sponsored a translation into Persian of the fifty chief Upanishads.\*

\* Dara Shikosh's poor reputation with the exoteric authorities may have stemmed from his public expression of Sufi interests and attitudes. Grandson of Jahangir and son of Shah Jahan, he was an unsuccessful contender for the Peacock Throne—losing successively the throne, his eyes and his life to his implacable brother, Aurangzeb. This translation of the Upanishads into Persian (then the language of the court and the chief cultural medium) which Shikosh sponsored was in turn translated about a century and a half later into Latin, by the Frenchman, Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron, and published in 1801–02 in Europe (Strasbourg). Thus were the Upanishads introduced into Europe, and it was this version that was used with much devotion by Arthur Schopenhauer. Anquetil-Duperron rendered *Mundaka Upanishad* III.3.2.9 thus: *Quisquis illum Brahm intelligit, Brahm fit*, adding the gloss, *id est, Quisquis Deum intelligit, Deus fit*; and he placed this last statement in exergue to his two volume translation as a summation of upanishadic doctrine. It is very instructive to compare this passage from the *Mundaka Upanishad* with John xvii, 3: *Haec est autem vita aeterna: ut cognoscant te, solum Deum verum, et quem misisti Jesum Christum.*

TO GEORGE SARTON

August 13, 1939

My dear Sarton:

Herewith the review of Radhakrishnan's book. You will see that it is, on the whole, a criticism, and perhaps you will not

“like” it. However, it seems to me important to point out that it is not really Hinduism, but a modern western interpretation of Hinduism, that he is working with; in some respects, indeed, it seems to me that he understands Christianity better than Hinduism (we must remember that the exegetes of Christianity have been Christians: the European exegetes of Hinduism, for the most part, neither Christians nor Hindus). It is curious that Radhakrishnan has nothing to say about Islam which in so many respects can be regarded as a mediation between Eastern and Western approaches.

I have just received and am already [*sic*] with great admiration for the author’s position and practical wisdom, *Peaks and Lamas* by Marco Pallis (Cassell, London and Toronto); who is not merely an explorer, but whose purpose it was “to embark on a genuine study at first hand of the Tibetan doctrines, for their own sake and not out of mere scientific curiosity” (p 120). You will read the book with great pleasure and will, I am sure, wish to commend it, especially as a model of *method* to be followed in scientific investigations that require intimate relations with alien peoples. I remark especially the concept of Translation as interpreted on pp 80–81.

Can I have some reprints of the review?

With kind regards,

Very sincerely,

George Sarton, professor of the history of science, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Indian scholar and statesman, author of *Indian Philosophy* and numerous other works.

TO GEORGE SARTON

August 11, 1947

Dear Sarton:

Nikilananda, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*—an excellent and complete translation of “M’s” record, a remarkable document . . . I’ll lend you my Ramakrishna if necessary, but look: this is one of the most important books in the field of religion



published in the USA in this century, and why not insist on the library getting it?

AKC

George Sarton, as above.

*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translated by Swami Nikilananda, The Ramakrishna Vivekananda Center, New York, USA.

TO JOHN LAYARD

August 11, 1947

Dear Dr Layard:

There is nothing better than the Vedanta—but I know of no Sri Ramana Maharshi living in Europe. I do not trust your young Vedantists, nor any of the missionary Swamis; though there may be exceptions, most of them are far from *solid*. I would not hastily let anyone of them have the chance. . . . Not even Vivekananda, were he still alive. Were Ramakrishna himself available, that would be another matter.

Sincerely,

Dr John Layard, Jungian analyst and cultural anthropologist, author of several works, including *The Stone Men of Malakula*, London, 1942.

TO GRAHAM CAREY

April 5, 1943

Dear Carey:

I read your paper once over and think it good. It is necessary but courageous to tackle the whole problem of superstitions but difficult because each superstition presents a problem to our understanding. I find that *superstare* has the primary meaning *to stand by, upon, or over*, but also the meaning *to survive*. In the latter sense superstition often coincides with tradition and ought not necessarily to have a bad meaning at all. Even in the

first sense it should not necessarily have a bad meaning—one can stand by or take one's stand upon a perfectly good theory. So many of these words (eg, "dogmatic") have acquired a bad meaning (a) because antitraditionalists despise the theory in question and (b) because those who adhere to the theories sometimes do so blindly and stupidly, ie, without understanding. (I met, by the way, some followers of Karl Barth, and was *shocked* by their violence and conceit; they hold *all* Christian mysticism in contempt).

Very sincerely,

Graham Carey, Catholic author, Fairhaven, Vermont, USA.

ANONYMOUS

Date not given

Dear . . .

Practically the whole of our cultural inheritance assumes and originally took shape for the sake of a body of beliefs now classified as superstition. Superstition, taken in its etymological significance, as the designation of whatever 'stands over' (*superstet*) from a former age is an admirable word, partly synonymous with tradition; we have added to this essential meaning, however, another and accidental connotation, that of "mistaken belief". Whatever we, with our knowledge of empirical facts, still do in the same way that primitive man did, we do not call a superstition, but a rational procedure, and we credit our primitive ancestors accordingly with the beginning of science; a second class of things that we still do, rather by habit than deliberately, the laying of foundation stones, for example, we do not call superstitions, only because it does not occur to us to do so. Whatever on the other hand we do not do and think of as irrational, particularly in the field of rites, but still see done by peasants or savages, or indeed by Roman Catholics, Hindus or Shamanists, we call superstitions, meaning so far by "we" those of us whose education has been scientific, and for whom whatever cannot be experimentally verified and made use of to predict events is not knowledge.

On the other hand, we have inherited from the past an enormous body of works of art, for example, to which we still attach a very high value: we consider that a knowledge of these things belongs to the "higher things of life", and do not call a man "cultured" unless he is more or less aware of them. At the same time our anthropological and historically analytical knowledge makes us very well aware that none of these things—cathedrals, epics, liturgies for example—would not have been what they are, but for the "superstitious" beliefs to which their shapes conform; and to say that these things would not have been what they are is the same as to say that they would not have been at all and to recognize that we could not, for example, have written the *Volsung Saga*, or the *Mahabharata*, or the *Odyssey*, but only a psychological novel. We could not have written *Genesis* or the *in principio* hymns of the *Rg Veda*, but only text-books of geology, astronomy and physics. To deal with this situation we have devised an ingenious method of saving face, preserving intact our faith in "progress" and satisfaction in the values of our own civilization as distinguished from the barbarism of others. In the field of myth and epic, for example, we assume a nucleus of historical fact to which the imagination of the literary artist has added marvels in order to enhance his effects. For ourselves, we have outgrown the childish faith in the *deus ex machina*, who indeed often "spoils" for us the humanistic values that the story has for us. We feel in much the same way about whatever seems to us immoral or amoral in the text. In reading, we exercise an unconscious censorship, discounting whatever seems to us incredible, and also whatever seems to us inconvenient. Guided by the psycho-analyst, we are prepared to take the fairy-tale out of the hands of children altogether; even the churchman, whose job and business it is to expound the Gospel fairy-tales, connives in this.

Having by means of these reservations made the epic safe for democracy, we are fully prepared to admit and admire its "literary" values. In the same way, ignoring the reasons for Egyptian, Greek or Medieval architecture, we are fully prepared to recognize the "significance" of these aesthetic facts . . . .

This was an incomplete hand-written letter found amongst AKC's other letters. It was unsigned.



TO ALFRED O. MENDEL

August 29, 1946

Dear Dr Mendel:

"Tradition" has nothing to do with any "ages", whether "dark", "primaeval", or otherwise. Tradition represents doctrines about first principles, which do not change; and traditional institutions represent the application of these principles in particular environments and in this [way they] acquire a certain contingency which does not pertain to the principles themselves. So, for example, as Guénon remarks on my *Why Exhibit Works of Art?*, pp 86-88:

une note repondant à un critique avait reproché à l'auteur de preconiser le 'retour à un état des choses passés', celui du moyen age, alors qu'il s'agissait en realité d'un retour premiers principes, comme si ces principes pouvait dependre d'une question d'époque, et comme si leur verité n'était pas essentiellement intemporelle!

For an example of how the word "tradition" can be misused, see my correspondence with Ames printed in the current issue of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. If it is so misused very often (pejoratively) it is because under present conditions of education, the "educated" are acquainted with "tradition" only in its past aspects, if at all, and not with "the living tradition".

You may be right about "slants" in writing. I attach importance to continuity (tendency to write successive words without lifting the pen), and think this corresponds to the faculty of reading sentences as a whole, rather than word by word. This is often very conspicuous in Sanskrit, where the crasis often results in the presentation of whole sentences in the form of one solid block.

Very sincerely,

Dr Alfred O Mendal was a professor of psychology at Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York, USA, and an authority on graphology. He was the author of *Personality in Handwriting*, New York, 1947.

## TO THE JOURNAL OF AESTHETICS AND ART CRITICISM

December 27, 1945

## A Rejoinder to Professor Ames:

In writing to Professor Van Ames (without thought of publication) I had not meant to discuss the relative merits of his and my points of view, but only to say that he did not seem to be using the word "tradition" in the "traditional" sense; and this he admits. I think I have shown in my *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* (1943, now op) and *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* (to appear immediately) that there is a theory of art that has been entertained universally, and with which there has been disagreement only at exceptional times or by individuals—with respect to whom I would ask, with Plato, "Why consider the inferior Philosophers?". In any case, those "who appeal to tradition" are not putting forward views of "their own".

Professor Van Ames or anyone else is entirely free to disagree with the "traditional" theory. I do maintain, however, that this theory *must* be understood if we are to avoid the pathetic fallacy of reading into the minds of "primitive", classic, medieval and oriental artists our own aesthetic preoccupations. That this is a very real danger is made apparent in the way we use such terms as "inspiration" (see my article, sv, in *The Dictionary of the Arts*), "ornament", "nature", and even "art" itself in senses that are very different from those of the artists and the theorists of the periods of which we are writing the history. And this makes it very difficult for the student to grasp the real spirit of the age that he is supposed to be studying objectively.

AKC

Professor Van Meter Ames of the Department of philosophy at the University of Cincinnati. In his letter to AKC, he wrote: 'You are quite right that I do not use the word "tradition" as those use it who "appeal to tradition." They form an impressive company. And they must of course dismiss me as not belonging to the "spiritually educated". . . . Here I can only say that I belong to a different tradition: pragmatic, humanist, pluralist . . . ' In a covering letter to the editor of the journal here in question, AKC wrote: 'If you think there is any chance Professor Ames would think I am casting an aspersion on him, I am quite ready to strike out the line "with respect to . . . philosophers." '

A note to the *Art Bulletin* on a review in volume XX (p 126) by Richard Florsheim of AKC's "Is Art a Superstition or a Way of Life?"; see Bibliography for the several appearances of this article.

In reviewing my "Is Art a Superstition or a Way of Life?", Mr Florsheim assumes my "advocacy of a return to a more or less feudal order . . . an earlier, but dead order of things." In much the same way a reviewer of "Patron and Artist" (*Apollo*, February 1938, p 100) admits that what I say "is all very true", but assumes that the remedy we "Mediaevalists" (meaning such as Gill, Gleizes, Carey and me) suggest is to "somehow get back to an earlier social organization."

These false, facile assumptions enable the critic to evade the challenge of our criticism, which has two main points: (1) that the current "appreciation" of ancient or exotic arts in terms of our own very special and historically provincial view of art amounts to a sort of *hocus pocus*, and (2) that under the conditions of manufacture taken for granted in current artistic doctrine man is given stones for bread. These propositions are either true or not, and cannot honestly be twisted to mean that we want to put back the hands of the clock.

Neither is it true that we "do not pretend to offer much in the way of a practical remedy;" on the contrary, we offer everything, that is to "somehow get back to first principles." Translated from metaphysical into religious terms this means "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." What this can have to do with a sociological archaism or eclecticism, I fail to see.

A return to first principles would not recreate the outward aspects of the Middle Ages, though it might enable us to better understand these aspects. I have nowhere said that I wished to "return to the Middle Ages". In the pamphlet reviewed, I said that a cathedral was no more beautiful in kind than a telephone booth in kind\*, and expressly excluded questions of preference, ie, of "wishful thinking". What I understand by "wishful thinking" (cf p 2 of my essay) is that kind of faith in "progress" which leads Mr Florsheim to identify "earlier" with "dead", a type of thinking that ignores all distinction of essence from accident and seems to suggest a Marxist or at any rate a definitely anti-traditional bias.

Things that were true in the Middle Ages are still true, apart



from any question of styles; suppose it eternally true, for example, that "beauty has to do with cognition", does it follow from this that in order to be consistent I must decorate my house with crockets?—or am I forbidden to admire an aeroplane? Dr Wackernagel, reviewed in *Art Bulletin* XX, p 123, "warns against the lack of purpose in most of our modern art." Need this imply a nostalgia for the Middle Ages on his part? If I assert that a manufacture by art is humanely speaking superior to an "industry without art", it does not follow that I envisage knights in armor. If I see that manufacture for use is better for the consumer (and we are all consumers) than a manufacture for profit, this has nothing to do with *what* should be manufactured. If I accept that vocation is the natural basis of individual progress (the word has a real meaning in an individual application, the meaning namely of *werden was du bist*), I am not necessarily wrong merely because this position was "earlier" maintained by Plato and in the *Bhagavad Gita*. I do not in fact pretend to foresee the style of a future Utopia; however little may be the value I attach to "modern civilization", however much higher may have been the prevalent values of the medieval or any other early or still existing social order, I do not think of any of these as providing a ready made blueprint for future imitation. I have no use for pseudo-Gothic in any sense of the word. The sooner my critics realize this, and that I am not out to express any views, opinions or philosophy of my "own", the sooner will they find out what I am talking about.

\*This is an overstatement. Beauty demands compatibility of form and function, but the latter must itself be noble and not essentially trivial. AKC exaggerated from time to time in order to make his point in a particular context.

Crocket: in medieval architecture and styles deriving therefrom, a small ornament placed on inclined or vertical surfaces, usually in the form of leaves but occasionally in that of small animals.

TO THE EDITOR OF APOLLO

February 23, 1938

Dear Sirs:

Referring to your review of "Patron and Artist" in the February issue, p 100, may I say that we "Mediaevalists" (I can speak at least for myself, Mr Carey and Eric Gill) do not hold or argue that "we should somehow get back to an earlier social organization", however superior to our own we may hold that such an organization may have been. We are no more interested in "pseudo-Gothic", whether architectural or social, than we are admirers of the present social order. Our remedies are not stylistic, but metaphysical and moral; we propose to return to first principles and to accept their consequences. These consequences might involve a social order in some respects of a mediaeval type; they would certainly include a rehabilitation of the idea of making as a vocation, manufacture for use, and an altered view of the use to which machinery might be put. But we are not using the Middle Ages or the Orient as a blue print for a new society; we use them to point our moral, which is that you cannot gather figs of thistles. We suppose that what is needed for a better social order and more happiness is not a blue print but a change of heart. We are not so naive as to suppose that any social style, whether democratic, socialist, fascist, or "mediaeval, however enforced, could of itself effect a change of heart.

Very truly,

Graham Carey, Benson, Vermont, USA.  
Eric Gill, cf Introduction.

TO KURT F. LEIDECKER

November 16, 1941

Dear Dr Leidecker:

The least important thing about Guénon is his personality or biography. I enclose an article by MacIver, *which please return*

(also "The 'E' at Delphi", which please keep). Guénon's own affiliations are essentially Arabic. He lies in retirement in Cairo: he knows Greek, Arabic, Sanskrit. (His two books on spiritualism and theosophy were clearances of the ground, preparatory to his other work. Thus no one can suppose that in his metaphysical work he is talking of any kind of occultism). The fact is that he has the invisibility that is proper to the complete philosopher: our teleology can only be fulfilled when we really become no one. I shall do some of the words such as *caitya* for you very shortly. A great deal of Guénon's important work appears in *Etudes Traditionnelles*, during the last 10 years.

I question the importance of item 4 for your Dictionary. I think item 12 should be Terminology (class concepts and "periods"). Item 9, add Exhibition. Item 17, I should say *sun-wheel* (avoid constant repetition of the word *symbol*, and for more precise indication).

I may be doing "Symbol" (in *general*) for Shipley, you want only symbols (in *particular*).

Very sincerely,

Dr Kurt Leidecker was working on a *Dictionary of Archeology* which was interrupted by World War II, when he was assigned to the Air Documents Center where he compiled the *American Aeronautical Dictionary*.

Joseph T. Shipley, *Dictionary of Word Origins*, Philosophical Library, New York, 1945.

René Guénon, pioneering traditional writer and outstanding metaphysician; a contemporary of AKC. See bibliographical section at the end of these letters.

*Etudes Traditionnelles*, 11 quai St-Michel, Paris.

*L'Erreur spirite*, see Bibliography.

*Le Théosophisme, histoire d'une pseudo-religion*; see Bibliography.

TO MR J. C. ABREU

October 7, 1946

Dear Mr Abreu:

In reply to your inquiry, I am in fundamental agreement with M René Guénon; this might not exclude some divergence on minor matters. His books are in the process of translation; four have already been published by Luzac (London). I



published an article on his work entitled "Eastern Wisdom and Western Knowledge" in *Isis* Vol XXXIV, 1943 and this article, brought up to date (nearly) will be included in a volume of essays to be published by the Asia Press, NY, this fall, entitled *Am I My Brother's Keeper?* My own bibliography is a long one; there is a list of the more important items printed in *Psychiatry*, VI, 8, 1945.

Mr Guénon lives in Cairo, and is a member of a Darwesh order, the Shaikh 'Abdu'l Wahid. Before that he lived and wrote in Paris. I think any truly descriptive writing "about the end of an age" must be "bitter"; but I hardly think Guénon's own feeling is that, but his position would be that "it must be that offenses should come, but woe unto them through whom they come". He is an exponent of the traditional "Way" by following which the individual can save himself by spiritual implication from disintegration, whatever the external conditions may be.

Very sincerely,

Mr J. C. Abreu, Vedado, Havana, Cuba.

René Guénon, Cairo, Egypt, was accorded the honorific *Shaikh* and took the Muslim name *Abdu'l Wahid Yahia*, ie, John, Servant of the Unique.

TO PROFESSOR JOSEPH L. MCNAMARA

December 5, 1945

Dear McNamara:

I don't think Guénon could be charged with dualism. In the last analysis the "devil" is the ego-principle, that which asserts *cogito ergo sum*\*: and so Philo and Rumi equate the dragon whom none but God can overcome with the sensitive soul, the "personality" in which the psychoanalysts are so much interested. Their "good intentions" are beside the point. The "soul" will remain a congeries or legion whatever we do, and the integration can only be *in its principle*, the spirit, "in which all these become one."

Very sincerely,

Professor J. L. McNamara, Roslindale, Massachusetts, USA.  
Cf 'Who Is 'Satan' and Where Is 'Hell?', by AKC, in *Review of Religion*,  
November 1947.

\* This is true as far as it goes, but the notion of Devil or Satan cannot be confined to a psychological context. What is in question is a cosmic force that is prior to humanity itself, a force of compression and separation, of spiritual darkness and negation, which is perceived by human intelligence as personal or 'personality'.

TO M. RENÉ GUÉNON

April 12, 1946

My dear M. Guénon:

I agree with you as to the limit implied in Tagore's writings. But I do not see why you object to the equation *ananda* = *felicitas* or *delectatio*. The root is *nand*, to take pleasure, with the added self-referent prefix *a*. And apart from the ordinary usages, one cannot ignore BU IV. 1.6, re *Brahma*: "What is Its bliss (*Ananda*)?, verily, to the mind; it is by the mind that one betakes oneself to the woman, a son of his born of her. This is his bliss: the highest *Brahma* is the mind." Here *manas* (mind), of course, is equal to the Greek *nous*, *intellectus vel spiritus*, and the "woman" is *Vac*; the son is the concept, and *ananda* is the divine delight in the conception and birth of the spoken *Logos*. *Ananda* is the divine delight in what Eckhart calls "the act of fecundation latent in eternity."

In connection with the question, Is the Buddhist reception into the order of Bhikkus an initiation? I am confirmed in thinking so, since I now find further that the preliminary shaving and lustration—*de regle*—is referred to as an *abhiseka* and, further, that the accepted disciple becomes a "son of the Buddha" and is endowed with "royalty" (*adhipatya*). The lustration corresponds to a baptism, which was certainly in origin an initiation.

I also find an interesting correlation of Buddhist *ksana* and Sufi *andar waqt*—both "moments" without duration, and the only locus (*loka*) of real being as distinguished from "becoming" (*ousia* from *genesis*, *essentia* from *esse*). This moment is the *mukta's* "world in the yonder world". It is this moment that

every "thing" *ama sunistatai kai apoleipei* (Plutarch, *Moralia* 392 C). The succession of these "nows" makes what we know as duration but in reality, all these *in-stants* are *one*.

Very sincerely,

René Guénon, Cairo, Egypt.

TO RENÉ GUÉNON

April 17, 1947

My dear M. Guénon:

I have been reading your *Grande Triade* with great pleasure and benefit. The following are a few points that have occurred to me: the character seems to have its exact equivalent in the sign shown as fig 1 in my "*svayamatrnna*" of which I hope a copy has already reached you.

The Buddhist term *sappurisa* (= *sat-purusa*) seems to express the idea of *l'homme véritable*, while *utrama-purusa* would correspond to *l'homme transcendent*. Thus *Dhammapada* 54: *sabba disa sappurisampavati, omnes regiones vir probus perflat* (Fausboll's translation). Also *Uttama purisa* is commonly an epithet of Buddha.

Cf also: p 53, *pouvoir du vajra*, Heracleitus fr 38

p 119, on the "Triple power", cf in my "Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power . . . ." (especially as regards the Gnostic formulation cited on p 44).

In several places you speak of Providence and Destiny. In English, I should prefer to speak of Providence and Fate: making Providence = Destiny. Our Destiny is our destination; fate are the accidents that befall us *en route*, and that may help or hinder, but cannot change our ultimate destiny.

*La Grande Triade* seems to me an especially valuable treatise, and I hope an English translation will appear soon.

M. Pallis and Rama are now in Kalimpong where the Lama Wangyal met them on arrival. They spent 12 days in S India and visited Sri Ramana Maharsi.

Very sincerely,



René Guénon, Cairo, Egypt.

*La Grande Triade*, Revue de la Table Ronde, Nancy, France; for other editions, see Bibliography.

"*Svayamatmna: Janua Coeli*", *Zalmoxis*, Paris, II, 1939, no 1.

'Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, New Haven, Connecticut, 1942.

Marco Pallis, London, England, see letter p 30.

Rama, AKC's son, Rama Poonambulam Coomaraswamy.

Lama Wangyal, cf *Peaks and Lamas* by Marco Pallis; for various editions, see Bibliography.

Sri Ramana Maharsi, South Indian Saint; cf letter, p. 39.

TO GEORGE SARTON

April 29, 1947

My dear Sarton:

Many thanks for your letter. Guénon's controversial volumes are no doubt less interesting in some respects, *but*, it is to be considered that he alone puts forward what is essentially the Indian criticism of the present situation. For this reason and because of their direct relation to your work, I send you these two only. His others, expository works, eg, *L'Homme et son devenir selon le Védānta*, *Les Etats multiple de l'être*, *Le Symbolisme de la croix*, etc, are not only the best and clearest exposition of Indian theory I know, but almost the only expositions of *pure* metaphysics that have so far as I know appeared in these days . . . .

I had the very great pleasure of meeting Professor Buckler of Oberlin and hearing his address on "The *Shah Nama* and the *Geneologia Regni Dei*" (will appear in JAOS this year and should interest you. His thesis being in part that the *Shah Nama* is an epic of the kingdom of God on earth analagous to the *Christus* saga underlying the Four Gospels—a point of view which I can fully agree . . . .

Very sincerely,

PS: If you have not seen it, do see Grey Owl, *Pilgrims of the Wild* (Lovat, Dickson, London, 1934)—one of the very best books that has appeared for a long time.

George Sarton. Professor of the history of science. Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

René Guénon, Cairo, Egypt; for his several book titles, see Bibliography.  
F. W. Buckler, department of church history. Graduate School of Theology, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio; author of several papers that interested AKC, such as that mentioned above and "*Regnum et ecclesia*", *Church History*, III, March 1934.

TO MR S. C. LEE

March 20, 1947

Dear Mr Lee:

I reply to yours of March 8, and send you below the message which would be the gist of what I should have to say were I to be present at your International Festival, for the success of which you have my best wishes.

If men are to live at peace with one another, they must learn to understand and to think with one another. The primary obstacle to such an understanding is, to quote Prof Burtt, 'the complacent assumption that all tenable solutions of all real problems can or will be found in the Western tradition.' This smug and pharisaic complacency is one of the causes of war . . . the cause that philosophers are primarily responsible to remove.

The most dangerous form of this complacency is to be found in the conviction that Christianity is not only true, but the *only true* religion; for this leads to repeated attempts to impose upon other peoples a 'Christian civilization', so-called. It was of this 'civilization' that Thomas Traherne remarked that 'verily, there is no savage nation under the sun that is more absurdly barbarous than the Christian world'. The opinion persists, however—it was recently enunciated by no less an authority than the Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh—that 'we Westerners owe (it to) the peoples of these missionary lands' to destroy their cultures and replace them with our own. And why? Because these are essentially religious, but not Christian cultures! For so long as this point of view governs the attitudes of the Western people who call themselves 'progressive' towards others whom they call 'backward'—everyone will recognize at

once the portrait of 'the lion painted by himself—there will be no 'peace on earth'.

I trust you will be able to read this message to your audience. I made a speech on these lines at Kenyon College last year and the audience was most responsive. Cf also my article in the *United Nations World*, No 1, and the little book just published by John Day (New York).

Yours very sincerely,

Mr S. C. Lee, director of the International Institute and International Center, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Michigan, USA.

'For What Heritage and to Whom Are the English-speaking Peoples Responsible?', AKC, in *The Heritage of the English-speaking Peoples and Their Responsibility*, Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, 1947.

'The Curse of Foreign Rule', AKC, *United Nations World*, February 1947.

TO PROFESSOR PITIRIM A. SOROKIN

January 9, 1947

Dear Mr Sorokin:

From time to time I remember the problem you have been set, and always come back to this, that the only way of salvation is through philosophy, that philosophy which "with its purification and deliverance, ought not to be resisted" (*Phaedo* 82 D). I think all wars, etc, are the "projections" of the war within us, the tragic conflict between "ought" and "I want"; in fact this is explicit in James iv, 1 (q v). The first desideratum is to teach men to be "at peace with themselves" (*Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, 320). From this point one might proceed to outline one's *phaideia*, or concept of the necessary "cultivation". The problem becomes one of how to regenerate philosophy as a pattern of life. And by the way, I thought John Wild's new book pretty good in this direction.

Very sincerely,

Professor Pitirim Alexandrovitch Sorokin, professor of sociology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.



John Wild was a well known Professor of Philosophy at Harvard University. He may have been the author of *Science and the 'Scientific' Scepticism of our Time*, apparently a pamphlet published by a body calling itself the Society for a Catholic Commonwealth. His comments were included in Wilbur Griffith Katz's *Natural Law and Human Nature*, 1953.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

March 14, 1941

Sir,

—In your issue of last December 19, the Bishop of Ely (via Mr Murry) is quoted as saying that there is no reason why the clergy should have any better understanding of the causes of the war than have “the altogether admirable men conducting the affairs of the nation.” This can only be sustained on the assumption that the clergy referred to are no longer in any real sense of the word clergy, but only “admirable men” of the same kind as the politicians who, whatever their other virtues may be, can hardly be described as disinterested critics of the industrial system. But it is precisely the clergy who should be and are assumed to be, philosophers in Plato’s and Aristotle’s sense of the word; and the philosopher who is “disinterested” by hypothesis, may and ought to understand much better than the politician whose immediate task is to conduct a war, what is the first cause of war. Plato finds the cause of war in the body “because we must earn money for the sake of the body” (*Phaedo* 66C). This does not mean at all that the body should be ignored; everything that Plato advocates is with a view to the simultaneous satisfaction of the needs of the body and the soul and for the good of the whole man. It does mean that the more we are “philosophers” or guided by philosophy, the more our most serious interests are rather spiritual than physical; and the less we are “men of property” or evaluate civilisation merely in terms of comfort and safety, the fewer will be the occasions of war, whether international or imperialistic.

AKC

*The New English Weekly*, London; full title: *The New English Weekly and the New Age, a Review of Public Affairs, Literature and the Arts*, edited by Philip

Majret with an editorial committee consisting of Mrs Jessie R Orage (sole proprietor), Maurice B Reckitt, Pamela Travers, T. S. Eliot, Rowland Kenney and W. T. Symons. AKC wrote frequently to this journal throughout the last eight years of his life.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY

February 21, 1946

Sir,

Apropos of your own remarks on "vocation" in your issue of January 17th, I call your readers' attention to the fact that *metier* is etymologically *ministerium*, a "ministry". Another form of the word is "minister", ie, trade, and "trade" is a *tread*, or a way of life.

I agree with Mr Fordham that it is to be hoped that a "partial paralysis *will* creep over the trade of the world." "When nations grow old, and the arts grow cold, and commerce settles on every tree" (William Blake): "When the timber trade is good, permanent famine reigns in the Ogowe district" (Albert Schweitzer): "No one looking for peace and quiet has any business looking for international trade (G. H. Gratton and G. R. Leighton in *The Future of Foreign Trade*, 1947). All this applies chiefly, of course, to trade in "necessities" and raw materials, and much less to a reasonable exchange of finished goods of the highest quality. It is as regards necessities, at least, that a community should be self-sufficing, or, if it is not, it will feel compelled to get what it wants elsewhere, even by fraud or force.

AKC

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY

October 4, 1945

Sir,

—I should like to call attention to some principles of the Rural Work Movement on India. In a recent address to trainees, the leader, Shri Bharatan Kumarappa asked what it is we want to work for, "mere material prosperity, or human development?" He pointed out that even amongst Socialists, "the

question of whether an abundance of goods is necessary for human well-being is never so much as raised." The rest I quote from the *Aryan Path* of August:

Shri Kumarappa makes out a strong case against large-scale production for India. excepting such key industries as provide machinery, raw materials for small industries, public utilities, etc. He shows how producing enormous quantities drives others into unemployment: how competition for distant markets leads to strife; how factory routine deprives the worker of opportunities such as cottage production offers for the development of intelligence, initiative, and the artistic sense.

I say that the main cause of world wars is the pursuit of world-trade, and that to dream of peace on other conditions than those of local self-sufficiency is ridiculous. Moreover, in a brave new world, the cultural domination of America is even more to be dreaded than that of England: for these United States are not even a bourgeoisie, but a proletarian society fed on "soft-bun bread" (these words are those of a well-known large scale baking companys advertisement of its product), and thinking soft-bun thoughts. The citations above are encouraging at least to this extent that if, as some think and hope, "modern western ways of life are about to swallow up all other forms of 'culture' " (which God forbid!); some of these others have not the slightest intention of going under without a fight, and that the end is not yet.

AKC

Bharatan Kumarappa, *Capitalism, Socialism or Villagism?* Shakti Karyalayam, Madras, 1946.

*Aryan Path* (Bombay), August 1945.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY

March 28, 1940

Sir,

Mr Durrell, in your issue for January 24, 1940, p 209, thinks in Lao Tzu (and by implication in Chuang Tzu) there is



"nothing applicable to the Distressed Areas". This is scarcely the case, unless by "applicable" Mr Durrell means to refer only to symptoms and to ignore causes. The Taoist view is that evil arises primarily from the interest we take in other peoples' affairs, and that the only real contribution that a man can make to the betterment of the world is to improve himself; just as in Christianity, it is a man's first duty to love himself and to seek out his own salvation. So Chuang Tzu writes:

*Prince:* I wish to love my people, and by cultivation of duty towards one's neighbour to put an end to war. Can this be done?

*Hsu Wu Kwei:* It cannot. Love for the people is the root of all evil to the people. Cultivation of duty towards one's neighbour is the origin of all fighting . . . . If your Highness will only abstain, that will be enough. Cultivate the sincerity that is within your breast, so as to be responsive to the conditions of your environment, and be not aggressive. The people will thus escape death; and what need then to put an end to war? (Giles' translation, chap 24).

"Cultivation of one's duty to one's neighbour" is the "white man's burden" as he conceives it, of which the consequence is the "neighbour's" death. The responsibility for the "Distressed Areas" rests on everyone who accepted the current philosophy of life. ("Civilization consists in the multiplication and refinement of human wants", quoted in a recent issue of *Science and Culture*.) As you have very justly remarked, the use of military force is hardly distinguishable, morally, from the use of economic force. If we could only refrain, not only from doing evil to others, but also from trying to do good to others (ie, good as we conceive, it and not as they have conceived it), and try instead to *be* good for them, there might be no need to put an end to war. This, by the way, may not mean that war would entirely cease, but that it would take on again an entirely different and higher "value".

Yes, man's "only responsibility appears to be to himself." We are, unfortunately, too selfish, therefore too effusive, to endure such a limitation of our responsibility; "we have desired peace, but not the things that make for peace." It is, however,

precisely such a minding one's own business as the "limitation of responsibility" implies that Taoism envisages a remedy for war.

I recommend to Mr Durrell (and others) René Guénon's *La Crise du monde moderne* and Marco Pallis' *Peaks and Lamas*.

An entirely different question: Mr Eliot wants a word to express the antithesis of Christian. As we have "Anti-Christ", why not "anti-Christian"? Nothing that merely expresses "Non Christian" will do, because the real issue is not as between Christians and non-Christians, but between "believers" and "non-believers"; or better, between "comprehensor" and "profane". In other words, the issue is between those whose moral judgements are based *on principles*, and those whose conduct, whether "good" or "bad", is always *unprincipled*.

AKC

*Chuang Tzu*, translated by Herbert Giles, London, 1889.

René Guénon, *La Crise du monde moderne*; English version, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, London, 1942. See Bibliography.

Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, various editions; see Bibliography.

TO STEPHEN HOBHOUSE

July 15, 1945

Dear Mr Hobhouse:

Many thanks for your letter of June 4. I certainly hope you will be able to publish an American edition of William Law; I think it would be widely read, especially by those who know something of John Woolman and his like, and that it would have a good sale.

Regarding the second paragraph on p 309, I think that in the note you might point out that the doctrine which some (amongst others, E. Lampert, more recently, in *The Divine Realm*, 1944) reject is certainly Roman Catholic, see St Thomas Aquinas, *Sum Theol* I.45: *Creatio, quae est emanatio totius esse, est ex non ente, quod est nihil*.

P 97: essentially a discussion of "Platonic love" (an expression

first used by Marsilio Ficino, and made the basis of the fraternity of his Academy), or as formulated in the Upanishads, that all things whatever are dear, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the Self, the immanent deity, Self-same in our neighbour and ourselves. Cf my "*Akimcanna*: self-naughting", in *New Indian Antiquary*, III, 1940. Other refs: *Hermes* XIII.4, "Wouldst that thou, too, hadst been loosed from thyself"; Rumi, *Mathnawi*, I.2449, 'Were it not for the shackle, who would say 'I am I?"; *Maitri Upanishad* VI.20, "he who sees the lightning flash of the spiritual-Self is of himself bereft", and VI.28, "If to son and wife and family he is attached, for him, never at all" (like Christ's "If any man would be my disciple, let him hate his father and mother. . .yea, and his own self also"). . . . [and cf the] Skr *ahamkara*, the "I-making concept" And as I also wrote,

*Contra Cartesium*

That *I* can think is proof *Thou* art,  
The only individ-uality from whose dividuality  
My postulated individuality depends.

with reference, in part, to the expression of the *Bhagavad Gita*: "undivided in things divided".

The fundamental problem of war is in ourselves; actual war is the external reflection of the inner conflict of self with Self. Whoever has made his peace with himself will be at peace with all men.

The importance of occasional reference to the Oriental parallels is especially great at present, because "peace", with all its implications is something in which the whole world must cooperate, it cannot be imposed on the world by any part of it; and the basic doctrinal formulae represent the language of the common universe of discourse on that level of reference where alone agreement can be reached on the first principles in relation to which activities must be judged. Partly for this reason (but also for clarification), in my own writing, I always cite "authority" from many different sources, as demonstration of an actual agreement that we often overlook.

I would be happy to receive any of the reprints of your pamphlets that you speak of.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Hobhouse, Broxbourne, England, editor, *Selected Mystical Writings of William Law*, London, 1940.

William Law, eighteenth century Anglican divine, non-juror, and spiritual writer influenced by Jacob Boehme.

Following are several editorial notes relevant to the above letter, the first from the *New English Weekly*, March 9, 1944, p 180:

Coomaraswamy *contra* Descartes forms an anthology of angry and yet deeply reflective comments, of which the most striking is this brief poem (*vide supra*). He himself thought the poem so concentrated that few could grasp its meaning, and accordingly added a note when it was first published: 'The argument is not *Cogito ergo sum*, but *Cogito ergo EST*—we become, because *He is*'.

Elsewhere in his writings, he returned to Descartes' famous axiom, sometimes with irony, sometimes with comments developed from Indian metaphysics: "'Self' is not an inference drawn from behaviour, but directly known in the experience 'I'; this is a proposition quite different from Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum*, where the argument is based on behaviour and leaves us still in an ego-centric predicament." (*Time and Eternity*, Ascona, Switzerland, 1947, p 23). Or again: Buddhist doctrine proceeds by elimination. Our own constitution and that of the world is repeatedly analyzed, and as each one of the five physical and mental factors of the transient personality with which the 'untaught manyfolk' identify 'themselves' is listed, the pronouncement follows, 'That is not my self. . . . You will observe that among these childish mentalities who identify themselves with their accidents, the Buddha would have included Descartes, with his *Cogito ergo sum* (*Hinduism and Buddhism*, New York, 1943). Again: 'The ego demonstrated by Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* (a phrase that represents the nadir of European metaphysics) is nothing but a fatally determined process, and by no means our real Self' ("*Prana-citi*", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1943, p 108).

And in a manuscript note in the possession of Rama P. Coomaraswamy, AKC wrote: 'The traditional position is that God alone can properly say 'I'. Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* is a circular argument, an ego subsisting in both the subject and the predicate.' See also the letter on pp 9-11.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY

May 3, 1944

Sir,

Mr John Bate's point about the East, made in your issue of March 30, is well taken. It is perfectly true that the East that can be easily known—the minority East that Westerners can easily meet—is already dazzled by modern Western civilization (the situation is very clearly exposed by W. Massey in his

Introduction to René Guénon's *East and West*). When I said "We (Asiatics) do not admire or desire the forms of modern western civilization", I was including in this "we", not the aforesaid minority, but (1) a very few, such as the Pasha of Marrakech, and Mahatma Gandhi (with his "unmodern attitude to the technological achievements of Western civilization, [and] his distaste for Western democracy", to quote Captain Ludovici), and a good many others who know the modern West only too well, and who often appear to be "Westernized", but are in fact profoundly orthodox, old fashioned and reactionary, and (2) an enormous majority who, because of their "illiteracy" or inaccessibility and for other reasons, are still "in order" and more or less immune to infection. Even in Japan there survives *at least* a profound belief in the divinity of kings, and that is the best ground on which one who hopes for better things there could try to build. Mr Quaritch Wales has pointed out in his *Years of Blindness* that western governments have never won the hearts of Eastern peoples, and that very much of the Oriental imitation of Western manners amounts to little more than lip-service paid to the dominating power in order to weather the storm.

General Chiang-Kai-Shek and Pandit Nehru are not "Asia". From our point of view such men, however "great", are already lost souls, and all that "we" expect from them are the expediences that may be necessary to the preservation of our very physical and political existence; "we" do not look to them for *enlightenment*. I am well aware that "our" still vast majority is on the losing side (at least in appearance) and diminishing in numbers, and I suspect that all humanity is destined to reach the subhuman levels of the modern West before an effective reaction can be hoped for. I do not mind belonging to what may seem to be the losing side and a forlorn hope; for if one does not take the right side, regardless of what seems likely to happen (and all things are possible with God!), one becomes a fatalist in the bad sense of the word. I called attention to the pasha of Marrakech because it is all-important for those, however few, who in the West are all against the present (dis-)order, to know and join hands with, and to cooperate with those elsewhere who are seeking to preserve what the Western "world of impoverished reality" has already lost, those for whom life still has a meaning and a purpose, and who

would rather save their souls alive than have "all these things"—modern plumbing included—added to them. I think it would be true to say that the majority of colored peoples still despise the white man and his works and would rather than anything else in the world, be rid of him.

AKC

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY

March 16, 1944

Sir,

I should like to call your readers' attention to the words of the Pasha of Marrakech (Morocco) reported in an interview which was published recently in the *Boston Herald*, and may not have come to their notice. The Pasha says: "The Moslem world does not want the wondrous American world or the incredible American way of life. We want the world of the *Koran*. . . . At the bottom of America's attitude is the assumption that all the world desires to be American. And this assumption is false." What is thus stated for the Moslem world, and is true for the greater part of it, is essentially true for the greater part of the whole Asiatic world. We (Europeans) are only conscious of this profound and well-advised cultural resistance to our "civilizing mission" because (1) to admit it would be offensive to our pride and (2) our contacts with English speaking Asiatics (and in India, often only with the servant class) are only with a minority in whom we have been able to implant the seeds of discontent with their own traditions, or who fawn upon us, for the sake of what they can get out of us. At the same time, it must not be overlooked that amongst those Orientals who have lived, and studied longest in the West are to be found some of those who are least of all inclined to accept what the Western world now means by "progress", and who feel (to quote Powys Evans from your issue of December 23rd) that "if the wrong road is taken, the greater the progress down it, the worse the result, and the sooner there is a reaction, the better." Speaking for these and for the inarticulate majority that has not been infected by the delusion of "progress", I would say that we



(Asiatics) do not admire or desire the forms of modern Western civilization, but only to re-form (reconstitute) our own.

.AKC

TO SIDNEY L. GULICK

May 6, 1943

Dear Mr Gulick:

It is very likely true that further correspondence will not help us much. However, I will say a few words on this matter of "progress". It is a question of values; where you are thinking of quantitative things, I am thinking in qualitative terms. No doubt every modern schoolboy knows many facts of which Plato was unaware, and there is no harm in that, but rather good, *if* good use is made of the knowledge. But the knowledge itself does not make the schoolboy any *wiser* than Plato was. We have acquired material means far beyond our capacity to use them wisely. These means look "good" to you, partly because they imply *power* in the hands of those who possess them; to the backward races, so called, they are known almost only as powers of death-dealing.

You will probably cite advances in medical knowledge. It would be strange indeed if a long period of concentration on search for improvement in means of physical well being had produced no useful results. Still there is much to be said, and that is said by doctors themselves, as to the balance of good in all this. For example, as to the distinction of curative from preventive medicine. Take modern dentistry: wonderful, no doubt; yet search has shown that primitive people, not living on our kinds of soft foods and white bread have almost always no need for dentists. And once again, in the matter of health and disease, the so-called backward peoples are chiefly aware of white men as bearers of diseases—measles, influenza, venereal diseases, tuberculosis, etc. In the matter of tuberculosis, in particular, missionaries have a very special responsibility, in that their failure to distinguish nudity from depravity has been the chief cause of the spread of this disease.

The late Dr John Lodge, one of the most highly educated and

cultivated Americans I have ever known, used to say to me: "From the Stone Age until now, *quelle degriingolade!*" Let me also quote from Werfel's *Forty Days* (1934):

But we don't want your reforms, your 'progress', your business activity. We want to live in God, and to develop in ourselves those powers which belong to Allah. Don't you know that all that which you call activity, advancement, is of the devil? Shall I prove it to you? You have made a few superficial investigations into the essence of the chemical elements. And what happens then?—when you act from your imperfect knowledge, you manufacture the poison gases, with which you wage your curish, cowardly wars. And is it any different with your flying machines? You will only use them to bomb whole cities to the ground. Meanwhile they only serve to nourish usurers and profit-makers, and enable them to plunder the poor as fast as possible. Your whole devilish restlessness shows us plainly that there is no 'progressive activity' not founded on destruction and ruin. We would willingly have dispensed with all your reforms and progress, all the blessings of your scientific culture, to have been allowed to go on living in our old poverty and reverence. . . . You tell us our government is guilty of all this bloody injustice, but in truth, it is not our government, but yours. *It went to school with you.*

The Rev Edwin W. Smith (African missionary), as President of the Royal Anthropological Society, said in 1934:

Too often missionaries have regarded themselves as agents of European civilization and have thought it part of their duty to spread the use of English language, English clothing, English music—the whole gamut of our culture.

He quotes Charles Johnson of Zululand:

The central idea was to prize individuals off the mass of the national life. . . . African Society has a religious basis . . . can you expect the edifice to stand if the foundation is cut away? Is not the administration justified in decreeing that the Africans are not to be Christianized because thereby they are denationalized?

You are doubtless right in saying that I have "missed

something" in my understanding of Christianity. I am sure I have missed much in my understanding of other confessions, also. Is it not inevitable that we should all have "missed something" until we reach the end of the road?

Very sincerely,

PS: Since writing the above I happen to have received Erich Meissner's *Germany in Peril*, still another example of the now abundant "literature of indictment" of what passes in modern Europe and the modern world in general for "civilization". The author remarks:

If we say that European civilization, the ancient traditions of Christendom, are imperiled . . . the shortest way of stating the case is this: during the last few centuries a vast majority of Christian men have lost their homes in every sense of the word. The number of those cast out into the wilderness of a dehumanized society is steadily increasing. . . . The time might come and be nearer than we think, when the ant-heap of society, worked out to full perfection, deserves only one verdict: *unfit for men*. . . . Beauty is a spiritual force. Capitalism has exiled men to a world of extreme ugliness. . . . The industrial worker . . . as Eric Gill puts it, has been reduced to a 'state of sub-human irresponsibility'. . . . There are two main weaknesses of 'organized' natural education. One is the intellectual inferiority which is the result of compulsory education on a large scale . . . the result is: the young people . . . do not know what knowledge is . . . this explains the dangerous gullibility which propaganda exploits. . . . Education becomes a province of its own, detached from life. Great philosophers have believed . . . that a disintegrating society can be cured by making education a well-built ark that floats on the waters of destruction. . . . [But] education . . . reflects necessarily the realities of the society of which it is nothing but a part. . . . It is therefore wrong to attribute a function to education which it cannot perform . . . compulsory education, whatever its practical use may be, cannot be ranked among the civilizing forces of the world. . . .

Roughly speaking, there are only two sets of combatants.



Those who say "let us push ahead; everything will come right in the end". and the others who say: "Let us try to stop. We seem to be on the wrong road. We may have to go back to find the right road again. . . ." The first set of fighters includes both the capitalists and the communists. . . . The Catholic Church has taken up her position in the opposite camp, hostile to those fatalists\*. . . . One cannot say that the . . . Church has been very successful in this struggle. . . . But who would wish to belittle this if the alternative is an increased intensity of disintegration, veiled as progress? What is there, in fact, in your "progress", which you can possibly have the courage to offer to the rest of the world, and even to wish to force upon it?

Very sincerely,

\* Obviously, much has transpired since these remarks were written. The Church has embraced so many aspects of the modern world that she is no longer herself. And the institution—save for a remnant here and there—to which even non-Catholics looked as a bastion of sanity, is now perceived as converging with a world in hastening decay—the world from which she should offer the hope of salvation.

Mr Sidney L. Gulick lived in and wrote from Honolulu, Hawaii. He had written a letter to *Asia and the Americas* in March, 1943, in which he attempted to distinguish the work of missionaries from the devastating effects of western economic expansion.

TO MR SIDNEY L. GULICK

July 21, 1943

Dear Mr Gulick:

Many thanks for your letter of June 27. You ask why I stay in the United States if I hold these views. I remain here because my work lies here. One can make oneself at home anywhere; one can live one's own life; it is not compulsory to own a radio or to read the magazines.

I have emphasized before that I am not contrasting West and East as such, but modern anti-traditional, essentially irreligious cultures with others. This point of view is one that is shared by many Americans, who have spent all their lives here. I have lived more than 25 years in Europe and as long in America and so it is rather ironical to hope that I may yet see more and more

of your better side; I think I am well aware of this side, though it may be one that survives *in spite of* rather than *because of* contemporary tendencies to stress the quantitative rather than the qualitative aspects of life.

Incidentally, in reading your letter to *Asia* . . . as printed, I note you speak of Sir Rabindranath. This is not good form, as he repudiated the title many years ago, after the Amritsar massacre.

It is of course, a truism to observe that every people and culture has both good and bad aspects. One does not therefore have to assume a latitudinarian and uncritical attitude to this or the other set of conditions, however.

I wonder if you ever consider such books as Aldous Huxley's *Ends and Means* or Gerald Heard's *Man the Master*?

Very sincerely,

Mr Sidney L. Gulick, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Rabindranath Tagore, the well known Bengali writer.

The Amritsar massacre occurred in 1919, in the city of that name in the Punjab. In a walled enclosure, Jalianwalabagh, a British general had his men fire repeatedly into an unarmed crowd while armed soldiers blocked the only exit. According to the official count, 379 people were killed and 1200 wounded and left on the scene unattended.

TO MR SIDNEY L. GULICK

No day or month given, but the year was 1943

Dear Mr. Gulick:

Many thanks for your letter of August 25. It is quite true that, like Christianity, Buddhism stresses that it is man's first duty to work out his own salvation, and that the social applications of his religion are more obvious in Hinduism. Nevertheless, consider such a dictum as the Buddha's most famous royal advocate, Asoka, [who] himself publically repented of his conquests and recorded this [repudiation] in his lithic Edicts. You say Buddhism repudiates the "self". This is a vague statement, if we do not specify which of our two selves (*duo sunt in homine*, Aquinas, *etc*), the outer or the inner man, is repudiated. The Buddha certainly never repudiated "self's

immortal Self and Leader"; the "self" that he repudiates is the one that Christ requires us to "hate, if we would follow Him", or again "utterly deny" (Math xvi, 24). This latter expression is very forceful and certainly of more than ethical significance. These dicta underlie, of course, Eckhart's "the soul must put itself to death", and so forth.

Finally, it is not safe to take your opinions regarding other religions from current translations, even those of scholars; you must have read the original texts.\*

Very Sincerely,

\* The reader is referred to the comments of the Introduction apropos this situation.

Mr Sidney L. Gulick, Honolulu, Hawaii.

TO FATHER HENRICUS VAN STRAELEN, SVD

November 18, 1946

Dear Father van Straelen:

I admired your book, *The Far East Must Be Understood*, very much, and now I have to thank you for the other.

I fully agree with you that "the unifying of mankind in a spiritual sense can only be brought about by religion"; also, I recognize how great a change is taking place in these times in missionary *methods*—although much of the harm *has been done*. But to identify religion with Christianity, I can only regard as *insane* (and this strong word I mean); just as much so as it would be for a Hindu to take up an anti-Christian position. I would not bar the eastern ports to anyone having personal religious experience; but, the missionary can no longer be allowed to *do* good abroad, he can only be allowed to *be* good.

Incidentally, I thought some of the Chinese Vicar Apostolic's remarks (p 57), eg, "China has given proof of a wholesomeness that we seek in vain among older peoples", as arrogant as anything that has been said by the most ignorant Europeans—who have themselves everything to learn from Turks and Hindus about a "wholesome attitude to sex".

Very sincerely,



Father Henricus van Straelen, SVD, Dutch missionary to Japan.  
*The Far East Must Be Understood*, by Henricus van Straelen, London, 1945.

TO F. W. BUCKLER

Date uncertain

Dear Professor Buckler:

I've been reading your letter to Gulick and feel that I ought to say that while I *was* talking primarily about the "proselytising fury" of the West, I would say the same regarding Christians as such. I think in fact that a *proselytising fury* implies a state of mind that would be disgraceful in anyone. Christians as such should produce a Christian civilization and make that their "witness".

You would wish to change a religion without destroying a culture. Because *our* culture has been secularized it is natural for us here to think that such a thing is possible. But in a social order such as you have in India you can no more separate religion from culture than soul from body. There, the divorce of a profane from the sacred hardly exists. Hinduism penetrates everything: one might say that the languages themselves are *calculated* to embody religious ideas, and so you could not substitute a new religion without substituting a new language (which could only be a "basic" or "pidgin" English). The same applies to all the music and literature and every way of life. The missionary is quite right, from his point of view, in opposing and ignoring all these elements of the Indian culture—he *must* do so, if he is not to be defeated by the whole situation. Add to this, of course, that it is impossible for him not to be of his own kind, and therefore impossible for him not to carry with him the infection of modern life. The only large scale effect of missionary activity in Asia, in other words, is not to convert, but to *secularize*. You must resign yourself to the alternative: to convert, you *must* destroy the culture, or if you do not destroy the culture, then you *cannot* convert.

Sincerely,

Professor F. W. Buckler, department of church history, Graduate-School of

Theology, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.  
Mr Sidney L. Gulick, as above.

TO REV PROFESSOR H. H. ROWLEY

July 4, 1946

Dear Professor Rowley:

Very many thanks for your kind letter re "Religious Basis. . . ." Regarding missionaries, I am sure you no more than I would wish to engage in any long controversy, but I should like to say a few words. To begin with, one must distinguish preaching from proselytising—the latter, indeed, leads only too easily to such indecent gloatings over real or imagined results, as can be observed in a recent article in the *Journal of Religion*. Secondly, granting the right to preach, I take the strongest stand against the bringing of foreign money to found educational institutions to be used as an indirect method of proselytising; this is nothing but a sort of bribery (or inverted simony); and under current conditions (Indian poverty and the economic value of an "English education") this kind of bribery has no doubt been more effective than the "rice" that gives rise to the expression "rice-Christian". However important the end may seem to be, one cannot respect those who employ underhand methods to gain it; the economic temptation is one that, indeed, few Indian parents can afford to resist; and while one admires those who can resist, one can only marvel at the missionary who is willing to "get at" the children by bribing the parent.

Foreign educators should be called in only by Indians themselves, and only to give instruction in special subjects. It is quite true that whatever Indian Christianity there will be should be an *Indian* Christianity. But the idea that Indian cultural values can be preserved amongst proselytes is almost entirely a fantasy. In the first place, in a traditional order like the Indian it is impossible to draw any dividing line between religion and culture; in other words, there hardly exists such a thing as a "profane" culture there. Secondly, only the smallest fraction of foreign teachers ever does, or even can acquire a real grasp of or assimilate Indian (or Chinese) values or other alien

values in such a vital way as to be able to communicate them; to do that would demand the giving up of as much of one's own life to those values as has been given to those in which one was bred (values, indeed, are only really understood to the extent that one lives by them). Even if a missionary wished to "preserve Indian values", has he the patience to spend, say, 15 years in India as a *student*, during which time he might absorb them, and during which time he would have to live as Indians live if he wants to understand their life, before he opens his mouth to preach? The question answers itself; and besides, patience apart, he senses a real danger, that with real understanding, he might no longer wish to change anything; he might come to desire only to *be* good, and to question the possibility of *doing* good in any other way.

I am quite sure and aware that there are some exceptional missionaries, and even that the general intention of missions is not quite as blind as it was once; still the general effect is inevitably destructive and only to a very limited extent palliative of the other aspects of the essentially materialistic impact of modern Western culture. Granted, the missionary is not himself awarely a materialist; but brought up as he is in an atmosphere of nominalism, skepticism, and in a world entirely dominated by economics, he is the bearer of materialistic values, just as a man may be a carrier of typhoid though he does not know it. He takes for granted the normality of the separation of things sacred and profane.

In the same way "conversion" is not the acceptance of a new dogma, but the taking of a new point of view, and literally a "turning around" of the vision from the phenomenal shadows to the light that is their first cause; this sunwise turn is a "turning and standing up to face the sun" (Hesiod's phrase in another context, *Works*, 727) and a heliotropy that is best described in Plato's account of the emergence from the Cave (*Republic* 514 f). This "turning round from the world of becoming until the soul is able to endure the contemplation of essence . . . the turning round of the soul's vision to the region where abides the most blessed part of reality", a turning that he compares to the revolution of a stage setting (*Republic* 518 C; 526 E, cf also 532 A and B; 540!; *Phaedo* 83 B; *Symposium* 219; *Philebus* 61 E, etc); Ruysbroeck's *instaerne*, ("in-staring"), is precisely that "inverted vision" (*avrtta-caksus*) with which the



contemplative, seeking the immortal, sees the immanent solar Spirit within him (*Katha Upanishad* IV, 1). But, as Eckhart says (Evans' trans. Vol II, p 137): "anyone who turns within before his sight is cleared will be repelled, for this light blinds weak eyes", and this is why prisoners of the Cave strive to kill whoever would lead them out of it (*Republic* 517 A); Professor Shorey's "Hardheaded distaste for the unction or seeming mysticism of Plato's language" (Loeb Library *Republic* 1, 135, note d; cf 146, note d) is "a rancour that is contemptuous of immortality, and will not let us recognize what is divine in us" (Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*, 1.12, b); is an exhibition of this murderous temper, for to pretend that Plato was a "humanist" is indeed to slay him. For what does Plato mean by "truth" and by "philosophy"? "Not such knowledge as has a beginning . . ." (*Phaedrus* 247 E, cf *Philebus* 58 A and *Laws* 644, etc). "Human wisdom is of little or no worth" (*Apology* 23 A), and only God is worthy of our most serious attention (*Laws* 803 C), the philosopher is a practitioner of the *Ars moriendi* (*Phaedo* 61, 64, 67), "the Bacchoi are the true philosophers" (*Phaedo* 69 C and D); there is much that cannot be demonstrated, "for it does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies, but as the result of much participation in the thing itself and living with it, it is suddenly brought to birth in the soul, like as a light that is kindled by a leaping spark" (*Epistle VII*, 341 C); and he continues, even so far as the nature of reality can be stated publicly, this would be unnecessary for the few who need but little teaching, and misleading to the many who would only despise what they could not understand (cf *Theatetus* 155 E—"take care that none of the uninitiated overhear"). There is nothing here to correspond to what a modern rationalist and nominalist understands by philosophy . . . .

Sincerely,

Rev Professor H. H. Rowley, D. D, Fallowfield, Manchester, England; also of the department of Semitic languages, University College of North Wales, Bangor.

ANONYMOUS

Date uncertain

Dear M:

I would agree with you that even the highest "cultural" values—considered as the rich man's "great possessions"—may be sacrificed when it becomes a matter of Worth that transcends all values. What I revolt at is the destruction of values that results when one aspect of this Worth is set up as its only true aspect. I don't think anyone can altogether ignore the position of very many deeply religious persons who would hold with, for example, Jung who says "to flatter oneself that Christianity is the only truth, the white Christ the only redeemer, is insanity." I would take this last word quite literally, or possibly substitute for it the word *paranoia*.

You mention Africa. I myself do not *know* (do you *know*, or only suppose?) whether "the African spiritual basis of life is equally good with that of Hinduism" or not; I have not lived the Bantu life for 15 years. In an analagous case, the well known American anthropologist Ashley Montagu has said that "we are spiritually, and as human beings, not the equal of the average Australian aboriginal, or the average Eskimo—we are very definitely their inferiors" (and has expressed this view to me even more strongly in correspondence)—and in this connection, the criterion "by their fruits . . ." might well apply. Professor Northrop (in *The Meeting of East and West*, p 22), remarks that

It takes ideals and religion to enter into the imaginations and emotions of all and lay waste their very souls. Not until man's cherished beliefs are captured can his culture be destroyed. This evil aspect of our own highest moral ideas and religious values has been overlooked; in our blindness to ideals and values other than our own we see only the new effects which our own provincial goods create and not the equally high value of the old culture which their coming has destroyed. Only a merging of civilizations which proceeds from the knowledge and appreciation of the diverse ideals and values of all parties to the undertaking, can escape evils so terrible and extreme as those wrought by the Christian religion in Mexico.

As for Africa, again [Jung writes]:

The stamping out of polygamy by the missions has developed prostitution in Africa to such an extent that in Uganda alone, twenty thousand pounds yearly are expended on anti-venereal measures, and furthermore the campaign has had the *worst possible moral consequences*. The good European pays missionaries for these results.

(Italics mine). Every anthropologist knows that this and similar statements are *true*.

Indeed, the missionary must be *paid*—and all his apparatus must be paid for, if he is not merely to preach, but also to proselytise, and to make propaganda for specifically modern Western, but really provincial patterns of “morality”. I say provincial, because there are no patterns of conduct that can be called universal; only principles are universal. It is because the missionary must be paid that he must misinterpret the peoples whose guest he has been or will be, if he is to persuade the pious American to shell out. To give such an account of India as can be found, for example, in the writings of Sir George Birdwood or Sister Nivedita would hardly open up purse strings; for there must be stories of infanticide, Juggernaut and people like Katherine Mayo.

To sum up, whatever good missions have done, I am very sure the evil outweighs it. One last point: a preacher can be a gentleman. Can a proselytiser? This is a world in which we have to learn to respect one another. We must not assume that God has only been really good to one chosen people.

With kindest regards,

Recipient not identified.

M. F. Ashley Montagu, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, USA; well known anthropologist.

Professor F. S. C. Northrop, department of philosophy, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

Sir George Birdwood, KCIE, CSI, MD. For his bibliography, see his book *Sva*, London, 1915.

Sister Nivedita (Margaret E. Noble), a convert to Hinduism\* who wrote *The Web of Indian Life*, London, 1904.

Katherine Mayo, an American who wrote *Mother India*, a book which gave great offense to Indians.



\*It should be noted that in the view of the orthodox, entry into Hinduism is only via birth into one of the traditional castes. AKC elsewhere posits the one theoretical exception—that of the *mleccha* (barbarian or non-Hindu) who becomes a *sannyasin*, an utter renunciant.

TO WALTER SHEWRING

Date uncertain

Dear Walter Shewring:

The following is by way of answer to other matters raised in your letter. I have not used Senart very much, but should call his translation good, though as in translating Plato, I hold that no one whose mentality is "nominalist" can really know the content of "realistic" texts. I like Teape's *Secret Lore of India* very well, though the versions are not literal, they are very understanding. Of the *Gita*, Edwin Arnold is good, but I generally work most with the Bhagavan Das and Besant version (with word for word analysis) published by the Theosophical Society. I don't need to tell you that the greatest scholars often betray their texts; for example, in the *Laws of Manu* 2.201, Buhler renders that the man who blames his teacher *will* become a donkey *in his next life*; actually, the text has *becomes* (*present* tense), and nothing whatever about the "next life"! I have often thought of translating the *Gita*, and many other texts, but that is a very great task, for which perhaps I'm hardly ready, and anyhow, I haven't so far been able to avoid the work of the exegesis of special problems. I was very pleased that you could approve of the "Knots"; I have thought of that article as representative of what I am trying to do; yet it is only a little part of what should be a whole book on Atman, or even on the Sutratman alone.

About "tolerance": I did not expect, of course, your full agreement. I would like to write a volume of "Extrinsic and probable proofs" of the truth of Christianity. I regard the notion of a conversion from one form of belief to another as analagous to change from one monastic order to another; generally speaking, undesirable, but not forbidden, and appropriate in individual cases (eg, Marco Pallis\*). Hinduism, like Judaism, is a non-proselytising religion. The Jew will say,

"I cannot make you to have been born of Abraham, but whatever you find true and good in my forms you can apply to your own." Buddhism, on the other hand, is proselytising in the same sense as Philo; a making more easily available what is universal apart from the special laws by which the particular traditions are practiced. In Islam, it is fundamental that the teachings of all the Prophets are of equal authority, but there is the rather impressive argument that one ought to follow most closely the teachings of *the Prophet of the Age*, in this case, Muhammed. However, I would not distinguish time and place from this point of view, and would interpret this also to mean that the normal course is to follow the Prophet of one's own people, whose teachings are enunciated in the common terms of their own experience. One can regard the Eternal Avatara as unique, but this does not mean that one must think of his descent as having been a unique *event*.

Of course, apart from all this, I have no doubt we are fully agreed as to all the reservations that should be imposed as a matter of duty to whoever seeks to proselytise; I am referring to the obligation to know and utilise the culture of the people to whom one speaks. This is recognized at least by some Jesuit missionaries who in China, I understand, are required to have earned their living in a Chinese environment and to have followed a Chinese trade, before they are allowed to preach. The average Protestant missionary is an ignoramus, and does not even know enough to bring to such peoples as the Hindus what would most attract and interest them in Christianity.

Further: to the point that to be a professing Christian is not indispensable for salvation may be added the fact that it is recognized that the non-Christians may have received the "baptism of the Spirit", although not that of the water—and if I understand the first chapter of John rightly, the baptism of the Spirit is superior.

Myths common to India and Greece—notably the dragon-slaying (Hercules—Minurta—Indra) as now generally recognized (there is a big literature on the subject). Then, the whole conception of the Janua Coeli, of which the doors are the Symplegades, ie, *enantiai*, *dvandvau*, contraries: this is Indian, Greek, European folklore; and above all, aboriginal American, too!

Next, I would think of the whole concept of the Water of



Life (of which the source lies beyond the aforesaid contraries, in the divine darkness). Indian, Persian, Sumarian, Greek, Norse and the whole concept of the Eucharist and transubstantiation connected therewith. Then also, of course, many things which are not so much myths as doctrines, eg, *duo sunt in homine* (Vedic, Platonic, Christian). Also the concept of the ideal world, that of the "world Picture" or *speculum aeternum*. I understand Huxley is doing an anthology, but I very much doubt that he is in a position to get at the fundamentals, although with all their great limitations I think both he and Heard are not without some virtue. Huxley, however, is rather sentimental, and cannot accept that "darker" side of God which Behmen, perhaps, understood better than most.

I have lately been reading with great interest Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* where certain Hebrew-Indian parallels are very striking, eg, Abulafia's "Yoga", the concept of *Mi* ("What?") equivalent to the Sanskrit *Kha* ("What?") as an essential name of God; the concept of transmigration (*qilul* = *Ar, tanasuh*)—"all transmigrations are in the last resort only the migrations of the one soul whose exile atones for its fall"; that every art of man should be directed to the restoration of all the "scattered lights" (cf Bodhisattva concept); "in the beginning", our *in principio, archè*, regarded as a "point" and identified with the *Fons vitae*.

Regarding Eric's letters, if you have in mind some archive in which all would be gathered together, keep mine, otherwise return them. I passed on your message to Graham Carey and hope he will not delay to respond.

With kindest regards,

\*Who became Buddhist following upon his contacts with and deep penetration of the Mahayana in its Tibetan form.

Walter Shewring, identified on p 23.

The reference in the first paragraph is to translations of the Upanishads; W. M. Teape, *The Secret Lore of India*, Cambridge, England, 1932.

'*Svayamatrnnna: Janua Coeli*', in *Zalmoxis*, II, Paris, 1939.

'Symplegades', in *Studies and Essays in the History of Science in Homage to George Sarton on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, edited by M. F. Ashley Montagu, New York, 1947.

Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Jerusalem, 1941. *Letters of Eric Gill*, edited by Walter Shewring, New York, 1948.



'Kha and Other Words Denoting 'Zero' in Connection with the Metaphysics of Space', AKC, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, VII, 1934.

TO ERIC GILL

June 14, 1934

My dear Gill:

I am very grateful to you for your kind letter, and delighted by your appreciation. After all, there is nothing of my own in the book except the work of putting things together, so there is no reason why I should not myself think it important as regards its matter. I have definitely come to a point at which I realise that one's own opinions or views so far as they are peculiar or rebellious are merely accidents of one's individuality and are not properly to be regarded as a basis for comprehension or as a guide to conduct. I am from my point of view entirely at one with you in the matter of religion, ie, as regards essentials, the only important divergence being that for me the *one* great tradition (or revelation) has had many developments, none of which can claim absolute perfection of (dogmatic) expression or absolute authority. That is, for me, the solar hero—the Supernal Sun—is always the same *Person*, whether by name Agni, Buddha, Jesus, Jason, Sigurd, Hercules, Horus, etc. On the whole *I can go further in* by means of the Indian Tradition than any other, but it can hardly be doubted that my natural growth, had I been entirely a product of Europe and known no other tradition, would ere now have made me a Roman [Catholic].

I am only too pleased you quote "The artist is not a special kind of man etc" It will interest you that only yesterday I had a few words with one of the Harvard professors in the Fine Arts Department there and he said he was constantly citing these very words in his lectures. Such things, and the review in the *Times*, show at least that there does not prevail an entirely *contra* point of view and that we have friends "in the world". I look forward to your new book very much and I am very sure that it will, as all your writings do, very wisely express from the practical point of view, the matter. You will understand of

course that it is a matter of definite policy on my part to work within the academic and even the pedantic sphere; that is analogous to the idea of the reform of a school of thought from within, instead of an attack from without . . . .

I remain ever cordially,

PS: I send this to England in case you are back from Jerusalem. I cannot help feeling that my written response to the *caritas* of your appreciation is inadequate, but I am very much sensible to your generous expressions!

Eric Gill, Ditchling, Sussex, England. See Introduction. He had written to AKC thanking him for *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (see Bibliography), saying "I am really overwhelmed by it . . . . It seems to me splendid, magnificent, marvellous and altogether excellent . . . ."

The quotation referred to in the letter reads in full: "The artist is not a special kind of man, but every man should be a special kind of artist" (AKC). *Art and a Changing Civilization*, London, 1934.

TO FATHER COLUMBA CAREY-ELWES

March 3, 1947

Dear Father Carey-Elwes, O.S.B.

Many thanks for your very kind letter of Feb 13. I am interested to see that you are at Ampleforth College, and so a colleague of Walter Shewring with whom I often exchange correspondence. My little "Note" was intended only to support your article in *The Life of the Spirit*.

About Christianity and "other religions" or, as I should prefer to say, "other forms of religion" (avoiding the plural) my position can be summed up in the proposition *Una veritas in variis signis varie resplendent* and that this stands *ad maiorem gloriam Dei*. I think, therefore, of their admirable variety as something very pleasing to Him, who must be very well aware that nothing can be known but according to the mode of the knower.

Therefore, I cannot think of any one form of religion as a preparation for another. Such a view would seem to me

analogous to the error of thinking one style of art is a preparation for some higher development succeeding it. I rather agree with the Moslem view according to which all the major prophets from Adam to Muhammed are of equal rank, but each is the prophet of his age and place; and certainly with St Augustine's splendid statement about the true religion that the ancients always had and that only came to be called "Christianity" after the temporal birth of Christ (of course I know that he withdrew this statement, but as I think, in this case his first thoughts were the best).

In all my work I endeavour never to discuss any particular doctrine without citing for it authority from Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and often other sources; and I emphasize that there is nothing peculiar to, for example, Hinduism and Buddhism except what I call their "local color". So, as I also often express it, I am on your side, even if you are not wholly on mine.

I should be far from denying that Christ is the "Heir of All Things". It is, however, for me a matter of "Who is Christ?"; whether, for example, Socrates was not also "Christ". A Roman Catholic friend of mine has spoken of Ramakrishna as an *alter Christus*; and this I parallel with the words of the Lama Wangyal (to Marco Pallis, who had been speaking of Christ): "I see that He was a very Buddha". Amongst themselves, I cannot *rank* the diverse manifestations of the "Eternal Avatar"; I think of Him as one and the same in all. There is a great spiritual delight in feeling that one does not have to compare one's own form of religion with others in terms of major and minor. This of course, is not a "latitudinarianism", for I distinguish "orthodoxy" from "heresy"; nor is it "syncretism", because for all their fundamental likeness, I do not think that forms of religion can be advantageously "mixed".

Very sincerely,

Father Columba Carey-Elwes, O.S.B., taught at Ampleforth College in England and was a contributor to *Blackfriars*, a monthly review edited by the English Dominicans, Oxford, England. *Blackfriars* also published *The Life of the Spirit* as a separate review devoted to "the theology and practice of prayer."

The Note which occasioned this letter is given below.



TO CONRAD PEPLER, OP

January 27, 1947

Dear Dr Pepler:

I don't know if you would like to publish this little note in *The Life of the Spirit*. You will see, of course, that I am not arguing that the Christian writers *derived* their wording from Gnostic or Hermetic sources, but that (as I carefully word it), the existence of these contemporary ways of thinking would have *facilitated* the acceptance of Fr Carey-Elwes' equation in people's minds.

Very sincerely,

## Note on "The Son of Man"

I think Fr Carey-Elwes is perfectly right in equating "The Son of Man" (or perhaps better, "of *the* Man") with the "Son of God". I am writing now only to point out that while this can be deduced as Fr Carey-Elwes does from Old and New Testament texts, the possibility of this meaning having been so understood by Christian writers is increased by the fact that this was explicitly a contemporary Gnostic position. Thus Irenaeus I, 6, 3, describing Valentinian Gnosticism says: "There are yet others amongst them who declare that the Forefathers of the Wholes, the Fore-Source, and the Primal-unknowable One is called 'man'. And that this is the great and abstract Mystery, namely, that the Power which is above all others and contains the Wholes in his embrace, is termed 'Man'. Epiphanous (*Panar.* 31, 5) similarly speaks of the Father of Truth as having been called "by the mystical name of 'man'". Cf also *Hermetica* I. 12 where "the Father of all gave birth to the Man, like unto Himself . . . bearing the image of his Father, and as was like to be, God delighted in the Man, whose form was His (God's own"; bearing in mind the traditional view according to which in all generations the father himself is reborn in the son. It will be seen that these statements imply that there must have been also in the Father a Manlike nature.

Father Conrad Pepler, OP, was editor of *The Life of the Spirit*.

TO FATHER COLUMBA CAREY-ELWES, OSB

May 8, 1947

Dear Father Carey-Elwes:

I am not quite sure if I ought to address you as "Father". In any case I thank you for your very kind letter of March 9, which I am sorry I had to neglect so long. I look at the different religions as "modes" of knowing God (in terms of the "affirmative theology") but think each makes slightly different groups of affirmations for most of which equivalents can be traced in the different traditions (it is a favorite task on my part to do this): but I am not quite sure that they can be combined in any syncretic statement. On the other hand, when we consider the "negative theology", in which, eg, as Cusa says, "God is only infinite, and as such neither Father, nor Son, nor Holy Ghost", then we find an absolutely common ground, transcending all the dogmas and formulae, however valuable these are (cf *Maitri Upanishad* IV. 5, 6 which I am sure Shewring will have, or you can get from a library, in Hume's *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*—not a very good book—especially as regards the Introduction—but adequate for the present point, viz, contrast of the + and – theologies). Hence acceptance of the truth of all religions is comparatively rare from the standpoint of dogmatic theology, but the rule in mystical literature (notably Islamic Sufism). Practically all that a Christian holds about Christ is acceptable from a Hindu point of view; . . . from the point of view of Clement of Alexandria . . . the Eternal Avatara . . . has appeared again and again in the world in the persons of the successions of prophets whose essence is really one and the same. Besides which there are what we should call "partial avatars". Of course, by whatever name one is accustomed to love God, one is humanly inclined to regard as *the* Eternal Avatar—the "only Son of God"—precisely thus, for example, the Vaishnava thinks of Krishna. But the really important thing is His presence *in* us: the bringing to birth of Christ—Agni—Krishna—within you until one can say with St Paul, "I live, yet not *I*, but Christ lives in me"—making Him what we should call a *jivan-mukta*, "released in this life", and making him in fact (if we take the word *quite* literally, as I am fully prepared to do) an *alter*



*Christus*. In other words, one who being *self-naughted* has fulfilled the philosopher's task of practising dying all his life (Plato), one who has fulfilled the injunction "Die before ye die", attributed to Muhammed, and stated by Angelus Silesius in the words *Stib ehe du stirbat*. I believe that is the great work to which we are all alike called. That Christ's religion is not only doctrinal but factual has many parallels: for example, it is said of Buddha emphatically that "as he says, even so he does"—and this is one of the explanations of the epithet *Tathagata*. (Probably *tatha* and *agata*, "who reached the truth"—"Truth" is in fact his "name", as it had been that of his Vedic antecedent Agni, and was later of Brahma and finally of the Sikh God.)

The values of Christianity cannot be overestimated, but that does not assert its universality as a necessary corollary. It is at least for me, the essence and not the mode of religion that is truly universal and immutable. So there is no opposition to Christianity from a Hindu point of view, but only to certain activities of Christians, notably as evangelists. This last opposition is absolutely inevitable because in the traditional civilizations religion and culture are *inseparably* combined, and the missionary is therefore always bound to seek to destroy existing cultures (this may sound exaggerated, but the necessity is apparent and I could cite authoritative sources for the fact.) Now the fact that a given activity in which one seeks to make another person "one of us" necessarily arouses opposition in the very best and most devout hearts already casts suspicion on the activity itself. In one sense or another it means war. And it is such a pity because it would be so much easier to *cooperate*. I hate to have to waste my time re the activities of missionaries. I'd much rather be engaged on exegesis, whether Christian or Hindu; only, I cannot expect you to agree with all this but have to say that I regard as the two greatest weaknesses—and dangers—of Christianity, its claim to *absolute* superiority, and its dependence upon a supposed *historical* fact. Nevertheless, as I have said before, even if you are not with us, we are with you.

Yes, I believe in the efficacy of prayer, but am not much practised in it, except in so far as I fully hold that *labore est orare* and do regard my work as a vocation. You have the advantage over me in that you are living a kind of life that has a *formal* religious basis and background. We look forward to benefiting by something of that kind when we return to India. So I can



utter a prayer for you, but only in the simplest and most informal manner, while your prayer for me may be more correct, so to speak.

Very sincerely,

TO FATHER COLUMBA CAREY-ELWES, OSB

June 14, 1947

Dear Carey-Elwes:

Many thanks for your letter. I have asked Shewring to lend you . . . *My Brother's Keeper*. As for jumping out of one's skin (or as Americans say, "out of one's pajamas") I am afraid the East, though still far less extroverted—less turned inside out—than the West, is doing its best to jump, too. This means that East and West have a common problem. I do not doubt that you are right in saying that in the West *order* survives in the life of such *orders* as yours, nevertheless I find even Jesuits infected by disorder and urging India to "progress" by *secular means only*—ie, yielding to Utopianism, (Laus Deo!).

I recommend very high Bharatan Kumarappa's *Capitalism, Socialism or Villagism?* (Madras, 1944); you will see what I mean when you have read it; it is in the deepest sense instructive, and constructive. On the other hand, how many so called "re-forms" are "deforms"!

Another very fine book, of a different kind, is H. Zimmer's *Der Weg zum Selbst* (Rascher Verlag, Zurich) about Sri Ramana Maharshi—probably the greatest living Indian teacher, and [proponent of] the great question . . . "Who am I?"

With kindest regards,

Sri Ramana Maharshi, previously identified; his collected works have appeared in both English and French versions.

TO FATHER COLUMBA CAREY-ELWES, OSB

July 25, 1947

Dear Brother Columba:

If I may assume so to write,—I will try to answer more fully later, but in the meantime I do want to say right away that I do most assuredly believe in revelation past, present, and future, and beginning, of course, with the “Invisible things of Him, known by the things which are made.” And secondly that, most emphatically I do *not* agree that myths are “naturalistic”; I leave all that kind of nonsense to people like Sir J. G. Frazer and Levy-Bruhl; see the sentence underlined in the Note 7 of the enclosed. Also that you underestimate the place of Love in Hinduism and Buddhism (of which very few Christian apologists have any firsthand knowledge). How often does anyone cite the Buddha’s words spoken to a disciple when both were visiting a sick man: “Whoever would nurse me, let him nurse the sick”? One of the most strongly emphasized Buddhist “exercises” is that of the deliberate and conscious projection of love and sympathy towards all living beings in every quarter of the universe (on this “*brahma-vihara*” see briefly in my *Figures of Speech* . . . , pp. 14, 7–8). Regarding Christ: he is not for me merely “this man” Jesus, presumably historical, but one of the manifestations of the “Eternal Avatara” who—to quote Clement of Alexandria—“has changed his forms and names from the beginning of the world, and so reappeared again and again in the world”; and one of whose names is Krishna who, to cite the *Bhagavad Gita*, says of himself: “For the deliverance of men of right intent, the confusion of evil-doers, and for the confirmation of the Eternal Law, I take birth in age after age.” But I do not believe in a revelation uniquely Christian, but rather with St Thomas (II *Sent dist* 28 q 1, a 4 and 5) that God has also “inspired” the peoples of “barbarous nations” with the knowledge that is necessary to salvation. As for “parallels”, my fundamental interest is not just literary or historical, but in *doctrinal* equivalences; that these are so often expressed in almost identical idioms pertains to the nature of the common universe of discourse that transcends the Babel of separated languages.

With kindest regards,

PS: When I speak of doctrinal parallels I mean such things as: *Hoc nomen, qui est, est maxime proprium nomen Dei* (St Thomas Aquinas, *Sum Theol*, I, 13, 11 [This name, *He Who Is*, is most properly applied to God.])—"He is, how else might that be apprehended? He should be apprehended as 'He is'" (*Katha Upanishad* 6.12, 13)—"In Him that is" (*Satapatha Brahmana* 2.3.2.1). Parallels of this exactitude are innumerable and I do not see how you can maintain that they are "not true parallels".

Sir James G. Frazer, well known collator of mythological materials.  
Lucien Levy-Bruhl, author of *Primitives and the Supernatural*, London, 1936, etc. The article with "Note 7" is not identified.

TO FATHER COLUMBA CAREY-ELWES, OSB

August 18, 1947

Dear Father Carey-Elwes:

I do thank you for your birthday letter of the 13th inst. On the question, when and to whom God has revealed Himself most fully, or to all according to their respective capacity, we shall have to differ, but for the rest I am in fullest sympathy. As to how I regard my life, I would not use the word "illusion", but would describe my personal temporal, and mutable existence (*ex eo sistens, qui est* [standing forth, appearing from Him Who Is—Editor]) as "phenomenal", using this word deliberately having in view that a "phenomenon" must, by the logic of the word itself, be a manifestation of something other than the mere appearance itself: and in this case, as I believe, of my real being, *in eo sistens, qui est* [standing fast in Him Who Is—Editor]. In general, in Oriental philosophies, human birth is regarded as a great opportunity—the opportunity to *become* what we *are*. So that one never wishes one had never been born, but only to be born again, once and for all, never more to be subject to the conditions of mutability-mortality that are inseparable from being born into any form of temporal existence.

For the rest, I can only say that I am very sure that your God



and my God are one and the same God "whom", as Philo said, "all peoples acknowledge."

With all best wishes,

Very sincerely,

PS: Did I ever tell you that I know two brothers, Europeans, both men of prayer, one a Trappist monk, the other a leading Moslem, and neither has any wish to "convert" the other?

TO BERNARD KELLY

November 26, 1945

Dear Bernard Kelly:

Regarding "*Extra Ecclesiam . . .*", I have before me a letter from the Secretary of the Archbishop of Boston (R C), in which he says that his formula "is of course, one of the most knotty problems in all theology."

Also in an article on the subject by J. C. Fenton in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, CX, April 1944 (also from the R C point of view). The article is much too long to quote but it is stated at one point that to be saved one must belong to the Church formally "or to the soul of the Church, which is the invisible and spiritual society composed exclusively of those who have the virtue of charity. No such society, however, exists on earth." This last statement seems to me to beg the whole question with which we are concerned. Also, "every man who has charity, every man in the state of grace, every man who is saved, is necessarily one who is, or who intends to become a member of the Roman Catholic Church." This seems to me contrary to the commandment "Judge not". I believe the Christian has no right to ask whether anyone is or is not in a state of grace. (St Joan's answer to the question was, "If not, I pray God that I may be, and if I am, I pray God keep me so").

There is also the expression "baptism of the Spirit" which, I understand does not necessarily apply only to members of the Church who, as such, have received also the baptism with Water. Are there specific limitations attached to the notion of baptism by the Spirit? On the face of it, one would presume

that such a baptism was of almost infinite value and involved a potentiality for salvation.

If it be said that to come to Jesus Christ is a prerequisite for salvation, then the question before us takes this form: are we certain that "Jesus" is the only *name* of the Son of God? (here I do not say "Jesus Christ" because "Christ" is an epithet, "anointed" and = Vedic *ghṛta* as applied to *Agni*, and such an epithet is a recognition of royalty rather than of essence.) *Agni*, the High Priest, is also Prajapati's Son, and would not Prajapati be a good name for Him *ex quo omnis paternitas . . . nominatur* (at a certain stage of the ritual, the Sacrificers say: "We have become the children of Prajapati").

It is quite likely you will not think it necessary or desirable to raise the ultimate question of *extra ecclesiam . . .* in the present and introductory Symposium, in which matters of full agreement are to be first considered. In any case, these are ways in which I have tried to consider the matter. Everything depends finally on the interpretation of "*Ecclesia*" and of the "Son of God"

Very sincerely,

Bernard Kelly, identified on pp 20-1, Windsor, England.  
Fenton, J. C., author of '*Nulla salus extra Ecclesiam*', *American Ecclesiastical Review*, CX, April 1944.

TO FATHER JOHN WRIGHT

January 15, 1944

Dear Father Wright:

Miss Maginnis has kindly shown me your letter, and I read Dr Fenton's article with much interest. I may say first that while I do not lecture on Scholastic theology, I do read Latin and Greek as well as Sanskrit, and I think I do have sufficient theological background to see the problem in its general context. The sense in which I am interested in the problem, you will gather from the enclosed paper. I would like to have Dr Fenton's address (I expect Catholic University of America), as I

would like to ask him for a copy of the reprint. I probably believe in the greater part of Christian doctrine more really than many unthinking Christians do. What I am "after," is to discover just whether and how far the proposition *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* stands in the way of such a synthetic view of religions as I have discussed. For me, this becomes a matter of the essential meaning of *ecclesia* and of "Catholic", and indeed, of "orthodoxy"; I cannot restrict any of these concepts to that of the *Roman Catholic Church*. It seems to me that when Christ speaks of having come to call, not the just, but sinners (Matt 9, 13) that this implies the existence then (and if so, why not now?) of a spiritual society of persons having the virtue of charity and whose salvation would not depend upon their particular acceptance of his own teaching. You are quite right, of course, in saying that the problem has a context, but in case you should be kind enough to reply, I would say, let us take it for granted that we are in agreement about such matters as Grace, Providence and Free Will, and that there is an ascertainable Truth.

Very sincerely,

Father John Wright, secretary to the Archbishop of Boston, Cardinal Cushing, and later to become himself a Cardinal and member of the Curia. Alice H Maginnis, Division of Museum Extension, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where Dr Coomaraswamy worked for the most productive period of his life, 1917-1947.

TO DOÑA LUISA COOMARASWAMY

1935

Darling:

. . . I have been having some correspondence with Gill in which I argued against his distinction of Christianity from Hinduism, one which as a Catholic he has always been careful to make. Now I am really touched when he writes "*I know you're right* and I've been ashamed for years at the superficiality and cheapness of my attempt to state the differences between Christians and Hindus." Whatever you feel about Gill's work



or writing, I do think it takes a real quality in a man to "confess" in that manner. . . .

AKC

Dña Luisa Coomaraswamy, wife of AKC, in India at that time on a study mission. Eric Gill, Ditchling, Sussex, England.

TO WALTER SHEWRING

March 30, 1936

Dear Professor Shewring:

Many thanks for your very kind letters, and the *Golden Epistle* which I read with pleasure and profit. It will probably be at least 3 years before I get to putting together a book on Medieval Aesthetic (by the way, in the meantime I find that *Integritas* is more nearly "precision" or "correctness" than "Unity"). I shall send you the other articles as they appear in the *Art Bulletin* so that you will have plenty of time to annotate them. If you have time to do this for the first article in the course of a year from now that will be ample. I shall of course acknowledge your help when the time comes.

As to nature and grace, I think the distinction is present in Indian thought. Cf for example the discussion in Pope's *Tiruvakakam* (Oxford). In the older literature, too, we meet with such expressions as "those whom He chooses". Because of the strongly metaphysical bent of Indian thought, however, the emphasis is often more on *necessitas infallibilitatis* than on Grace—"ask and ye shall receive", with the idea that God *cannot but* respond to the prepared soul. I do not for the present expect to find complete acceptance of other religions by Christians but do expect, what there is even now no objection to, an agreement with respect to individual doctrines, the enunciation of which is common to Catholicism and Hinduism; for example, that of the |one| essence and two natures, and apart from the question of total acceptance, it seems to me that the Christian *fidei defensor* would be well advised to make use of such agreements as being what St Thomas calls "extrinsic and probable proofs", and have little doubt you would quite agree

with me thus far. Your poem on the picture is beautifully done. I am happy to have introduced you to Guénon.

Very sincerely,

Walter Shewring, Ampleforth College, York, England

René Guénon, Cairo, Egypt

*The Golden Epistle*, William of St Thierry, translated by Walter Shewring and Justin McCann, London, 1930. Cistercian Publications, Spenser, Massachusetts, published a later translation by Theodore Berkeley, OCSO, in 1971.

*Tiruvachakam*, a collection of hymns of the South Indian Śaivite saint Manikkavasagar; these hymns, along with others of the Śaiva Siddhanta are noted for their intense devotional quality and exquisite expression.

TO BERNARD KELLY

November 14, 1946

Dear Bernard Kelly:

Just a line to say, when you review *Figures of Thought*, by all means *correct* my error about Transubstantiation. I don't need to tell you that I don't mean to *play* with any idea. I have taken *quasi* in Eckhart, etc, to refer always to symbols, which, however adequate, give us only an *inkling* of the realities they represent. Also, I think there is still this much truth (and not an unimportant truth) in what I was trying to say: *viz*, that we ought really to transubstantiate, or what comes to the same, sacrifice (make holy) everything, by "taking it out of its sense" in our apprehension—or, if not, [we] are living by "bread alone".

By the way, no one had ever remarked upon the repudiation of copyright in *Figures*. . . and in *Why Exhibit*. . . I shouldn't mind if you do.

I'm grateful for your review of *Religious Basis*. . .; also, Grigson's of *Figures*. . . in *Spectator*, October 25.

I suppose you got either from me or otherwise, Al-Ghazali's *Mishkat* (published by Royal Asiatic Soc, 1924); well worth having—the Introduction also good. On the whole, how much better Islam has fared than Hinduism in translation and comment by scholars! For example, Gairdner is *very* wary of

finding "Pantheism" in Islam. By the way, as regards the criterion as annunciated on top of p 39, I usually think of pantheism as asserting God = All, but not also more than all, not also transcendent; doesn't that come to the same thing? At the same time, another point: isn't there a sense in which we must be pantheists; *vis*, this, that the finite cannot be outside the infinite, for were it so, the infinite would be bounded by what is external to it? But what is "in" God is God; and in this sense it would appear correct to say that all things, taken out of their sense, are God, for as ideas in the divine mind, they are not other than that mind. I think the right solution is "fused but not confused" (Eckhart) and *bhedabheda*, "distinction without difference". Perhaps I said before, the best illustration is afforded by her ray—identical with the centre when it goes "in" and individual when it goes "out". If there were confusion absolute, the notion of the liberated as "movers-at-will" (*kamacarin*) would surely be meaningless. So, as usual, the correct position is one of a middle way between absolute identity and complete distinction.

I know the "danger of knowledge"; and that's largely why we mean to go to India ourselves; not that realisations are not possible everywhere, but partly to make a more definite transition; also; partly, of course for other reasons.

I might appropriate to myself the last two sentences of the *Mishkat*. "Shining surface": is not this like the mass of rays that conceals the sun so that we do not "see the wood for the trees"? Not so much a wall created by our blindness as created for us by his manifestation itself; to be penetrated, of course. However, the word "shining" is, I believe, only Edwin Arnold's own; it is rather the depth and stillness of the open sea that the texts themselves emphasize.

I note in *The Life of the Spirit* (Nov 1946): "The incarnation. . . whose meaning is re-enacted in the life of every *alter-Christus*." In this sense I suppose St Paul ("I live, yet not I but Christ in me") is an "alter-Christus"?

Affectionately,

PS: about "choosing" a tradition, I fully agree. It is rather the "tradition" that should choose *us*, either by the circumstances of our birth or by a subsequent personal illumination (cf St Paul's).



Bernard Kelly, Windsor, England. See pp 20–1; Kelly was reviewing AKC's *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* (London, 1946) and had some disagreement about AKC's discussion of Transubstantiation. Both this book and AKC's *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* (London, 1943) bore the following notice: "No rights reserved. Quotations of reasonable length may be made without written permission." *The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society; Indian Culture and English Influence; East and West* (all by AKC), New York, 1946.

*Mishkat al-Anwar* (The Niche for Lights), al- Ghazzali; translated by W.H.T. Gairdner, Royal Asiatic Society Monographs, Vol XIX, London, 1924; Pakistani edition 1973.

*The Life of the Spirit*, a review of spirituality published by the Dominicans of England, Oxford.

"Panthéism, Indian and Neo-Platonic", AKC, *Journal of Indian History*, Vol XVI, 1937; French translation in *Etudes Traditionnelles*, XLIII, Paris, 1938.

TO BERNARD KELLY

December 29, 1946

Dear Bernard Kelly:

About the Eucharist as a type of a transubstantiation that ought to be realised in secular life: Eckhart (Evans I, 408, Pfeiffer 593), "Were anyone as well prepared for outer food as for the Sacrament, he would receive God (therein) as much as in the Sacrament (itself)." This is just what I wanted to say, I think this is true.

About *alter Christus*, *ibid* p 592: "By living the life of Christ rather than my own, so I have Christ as 'me' rather than myself, and I am called 'Christ' rather than John or Jacob or Ulrich; and if this befalls out of time, then I am transformed into God."

About *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*: the Papal Bull *Unigenitus* against Jansenism amongst other things declared that the proposition "Grace is not given outside the Church" is untrue.

Karl Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, 1929, says the Church is the normal institute of grace, but the Grace of Christ is not hindered from visiting particular men without the mediation of the Church; and those who are thus visited by his Grace in this immediate way belong to the invisible Church (this is what I mean when I sometimes talk of the "reunion of the Churches" in the widest sense).

This material in the last two paragraphs above is taken from

Bevan, *Christianity*, Home University Library, pp 194, 5. Bevan, however, on p 215 says Christianity is either the one religion for mankind, "or it is altogether nonsense"—which seems to me to be a total *non sequitur*. "The Lord knoweth who are his" (II Tim 2, 19); it is a presumption to think that *we* know.

Kindest regards,

The following, part of another letter, was enclosed:

St Thomas, *Lib II Sententiarum*, dist 28. q.1. art 4: "A man may prepare himself by what is contained in natural reason for receiving faith. Wherefore it is said that if anyone born in barbarous nations doeth what lieth in him, God will reveal to him that which is necessary to salvation, either by inspiration or by sending him a teacher" (here "by inspiration" shows that St Thomas is not merely thinking of Christian missionaries, but of direct illumination). In *Summa Theol* II-II.2.7 and 3, St Thomas with reference to the salvation of the Sibyls allows that some persons may have been saved without any revelation, because of their faith in a Mediator, in a Providence etc, not explicit but implicit "since they believed that God would deliver mankind in whatever way was pleasing to Him." Cf II Tim 2, 9 & 19: "the word of God is not bound." "The Lord knoweth who are His."

I think it is not for us to pretend to know that. Job 19, 25: "I know my Redeemer liveth"; I have always felt that his is the main thing, and that one cannot *know* that he "lived", and I cannot think that to believe that he "lived" (was born in Bethlehem) is as important as to know that he "lives".

However, as regards "teachers": everyman is virtually an *alter Christus*, ie, potentially capable of being able to say "I live, yet not I, but Christ in me"; and I do not think it is anyman's prerogative to say to what extent this perfection has been approached by any one. Marco Pallis' Lama said of Christ, "I see he was a very Buddha".

Kindest regards,

Bernard Kelly, Windsor, England.  
Marco Pallis, London, England.

TO BERNARD KELLY

January 8, 1947

Dear Bernard Kelly:

Yours of 2.1.47. As before, I accept the authority of your definition as regards Transubstantiation *strictu sensu*, and expect you to make the necessary criticism of what I say in *Figures*. . . . As regards most of the remainder, we are, in the first place agreed that there is *una veritas*; the question being only whether *in variis signis varie resplendet*. The problem therefore resolves itself, as always, into "What think ye of Christ?" I do not think of Him as having revealed Himself visibly only as Jesus, nor of the Church as being the literally visible Roman Catholic *universitas* only; as you say, the question is of "religion", not really of "religions". Which boils down to asking whether, eg, Islam is *religion*. To this question I say yes. Does a Roman Catholic have to say No? That is our problem, isn't it?

I agree to the formula "Jacob in Christ"; but also simply Christ, if Jacob earns the right to say "I live, yet not I, but Christ in me."

Kindest regards,

Bernard Kelly, Windsor, England.

TO JOHN JOSEPH STOUDT

May 14, 1947

My dear Dr Stoudt:

I am greatly indebted to you for sending. . . , through the publishers, your. . . version of Jacob Boehme's *The Way to Christ*. It is a very fine piece of translation, and I shall find an opportunity to review it, perhaps for the *Review of Religion* if the publishers have not sent them a review copy, or if not, if you ask them to do so.

I would like to have seen fuller notes, for instance in connection with the "Spark", p 246 (cf note 31 in the JAOS article I am sending you, though there is much more material



than is mentioned there). Notwithstanding that Boehme was "untaught", it seems to me he must in some way have had knowledge of many traditional formulations. On the same page, "smouldering wick" must be an echo of Matt xii, 23, and this also is a reference to the "Spark", which Philo speaks of as *asbestos*, since it can never be totally extinguished. Very probably Boehme got his material on the Spark from Eckhart, who uses the concept so often and equates it with Synteresis. As regards the "Separator" (p xxix, cf 188) this is the *Logos Tomeus*, on which E. R. Goodenough has a valuable treatise in *Yale Classical Studies* (III, 1932).

However, the chief thing I want to say is with reference to your occasional depreciation of other religions, in the Introduction xxxi—xxxiii. These seem to me to mar the perfection and the serenity of your position. No one, I think, has a right to compare his own with other religions unless he knows the latter in their sources (original languages and contexts) as well as he knows his own; it is absolutely unsafe to rely on translations by scholarly rationalists, themselves entirely unfamiliar with the language of Western mysticism. Take for example, "Boehme was not a Buddhist". I daresay you know there exists a considerable literature in which it is argued that many things in the New Testament are directly of Buddhist origin; I do not believe this myself, but it shows how near together these two come. There are many respects in which Boehme is assuredly "Buddhist"; take for example the *Supersensual Life* on page 54, and the Buddha's words: "Whoever would nurse me, let him nurse the sick" (Vin 1. 302). Or again compare Boehme's "Ungrund" with the conception in Buddhism of the Incomposite (= Nirvana, for which see p 68, in the review of Archer's book which I am sending). Again Boehme's advocacy of self-naughting (harking back of course to Christ's own *denegat seipsum*, which implies, according to the Greek verb here, an ontological even more than an ethical denial) is quite as strong as Eckhart's and Blake's, and it is identical with the Buddhist (and Hindu) conception no less than with Christ's *odet suam animam*. Again, *Supersensual Life*, p 27, where the Unground is equivalent to "nothing and all" and this is exactly equivalent to the Buddhist definitions of Nirvana as "void" of all *things* coupled with the affirmation that "he who finds it findeth all" (*sabbam lagghatti*, *Khp* viii).

With *Supersenaul Life*, 24, I would like you to compare the *Bhagavad Gita* 6.5,6, on the relations of the two selves (and of course many parallels in Plato, and throughout the Christian treatment of the accepted axiom *duo sunt in homine*); and for the nature of their reconciliation, my article on the Hare (also sent you, p 2, 3, passage as marked).

May I suggest that in your forthcoming major work on Boehme (to which I look forward eagerly) you make no references to other religions? Such references in no way enhance the glory of Christianity, but only tend to make the non-Christian reader think that the work is nothing but another piece of Christian propaganda. It is easy enough to interest a Hindu in the classics of Western mysticism, but if these classics are introduced with an accompaniment of misinterpretations of his religion he is little likely to be attracted, only repelled. The same standards of scholarship are applicable to the *whole* field of comparative religion, not only to Christianity, and the concept of truth demands an absolute sense of responsibility. It is just because your own mind and your *positive* exposition are so good that I would urge you to omit from the major work any pejorative references to other religions; Christianity has nothing to gain, but everything to lose by them.

One other point, p xxxl: in a general way there is a logical distinction between the way of devotion (*bhakti* in Hinduism) and the gnostic way (*jnana*). But the end is the same. Consider Rumi's words: "What is love? Thou shalt know when thou becomest Me."

With kindest regards,

John Josphe Stoudt, *The Way to Christ*, by Jacob Boehme, New York, 1947. JAOS = *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. The JAOS article referred to was his review of John Clarke Archer's *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyyas*, in vol LXVII (1947, pp 67-30) of this journal.

John Layard's *The Lady of the Hare: a Study in the Healing Power of Dreams* was reviewed by AKC in *Psychiatry*, vol VIII (1945, part 4, pp 507-513). See also AKC's "On Hares and Dreams", in *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, vol XXXVII, no 1, 1947.

Jalal ud-Din Rumi, Sufi saint, founder of a Sufi order, and one of the greatest if not the greatest of Sufi mystical poets.



TO FATHER GEORGE B. KENNARD, SJ

October 12, 1943

Dear Father Kennard:

Many thanks for your kind and long letter. I shall try to see Father Johann's article. I would say that many of these things are matters of fact. I agree that the West has something "invaluable" to offer in Christianity, but the converse is no less true.

As to the matters of fact: you say or cite that India has to be taught the way of self-conquest, and also the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. I do not know why this should be so, seeing that both are already integral parts of Vedic philosophy. As to the first, you will find some of the material in the "Akimcanna" paper I am sending, and which I am sorry I must ask you to return, as I have only a lending copy. As in Plato, with his mortal and immortal soul, the Vedantic mortal self and its "immortal Self and Leader" (= Plato's Soul of the soul) and St Paul's Spirit as distinguished from soul (Heb iv, 12), the question is, which shall rule, the better or the worse, superior or inferior. The most direct statement about self-conquest is, I think, that of *Bhagavad Gita* VI. 5,6:

Let him uplift self by Self, not let self sink down; for verily Self is the friend of the self, and also self's foe. Self is the friend of the self in his case whose self has been *conquered* (*jitah*, the ordinary military term, as in *jaya*, victory), but acts as the foe in hostile conflict with self undaunted.

Regarding *creatio ex nihilo*, I would have to write a longer exposition, dealing with *kha* (*chaos*), *akasa* (light as quintessence), and the Gnostic *topes*; with reference also to *Sum Theol* (Aquinas) I.45.1: *emanatio omnis entis ex non ente quod est nihil*\* (I quote from memory); to the equation of God with nihil in Eckhart and other mystics, it is obvious that the first cause of "things" must be no thing; and the whole matter of intelligible forms and sensible phenomena in West and East sources; and also take up the uses of *teino* and its Sanskrit equivalent *tan* (extend), together with the thread-spirit doctrine (cf in my "Literary Symbolism" in the *Dictionary of World Literature*, 1943, where it is briefly cited); and the use of *elkō*. In our theology God is the



Supreme Identity of being-and-non-being (*sadasat*), and these are his essence and his nature, which latter he separates from himself as a mother of whom to be born (of course, I could give you all the references, but won't do that now). Hence the precise statement of *Rgveda* X.7214: "being is born of non-being". It is interesting, too, that just as our "nothing" is also "evil", viz, naught-y, so *a-sat*, non-being has also precisely this value of "naughty" in Sanskrit contexts. So too, the process of perfecting is a procedure from a "to-be-done" to a "having-done-what-was-to-be-done", ie, potentiality to act. We are thus dealing with a whole system of equivalent notions.

In my view, then, it is not so much a question of introducing any new doctrinal truths to one another, as it is of bringing together the equivalent formulations and so establishing the truth on the basis of both authorities. This I conceive to be the proper work of "comparative religion", considered as a true discipline and not mere satisfaction of curiosity. The different scriptures rather illuminate than correct one another.

With reference to the Cross: consider the implications of *teino*, with reference to the crucifixion as an extension. From our point of view, the Eternal Avatara (and of course, we should regard Christ as one of His epithets) is extended *in principio* on the three dimensional cross of the universe that he "fills", that would be involved in the "eternal birth", while the historical crucifixion in the two dimensions would be the necessary projection of the same "event" in a world of contraries (*enantiai*, right and left, etc).

I am afraid I cannot, although your kind invitation is attractive, now promise to write on any of the problems you suggest, for the reason that I am "snowed under" by existing commitments and unfinished articles. Incidentally, in the first issue of the *Bookman*, I am disagreeing with Beardsley and Wimsatt's statements on "Intention" in the *Dictionary of World Literature*, and maintaining that criticism must be based on the ratio of intention and result, the classical standard of judgement, and I believe this will interest you.

I shall, in accord with what you say, expect return of one copy of *Why Exhibit*. . .? presently. Most of the English reviewers either, as Catholics, agree with the general thesis, or as aestheticians cannot bear to agree that art has any other purpose than to produce sensations, or bring themselves to

have to *think* in the presence of a work of art.

I have also written an introduction for Gill's posthumous essays.

With very kind regards,

\* The passage from the *Summa Theologiae* (I-I.45.1, res) which AKC cited from memory was presumably the following: *Sicut igitur generatio hominis est ex non ente quod est non homo, ita creatio, quae est emanatio totius esse, est ex non ente quod est nihil.*

Father George B. Kennard, S J, managing editor of *The Modern Schoolman: a Quarterly Journal of Philosophy*, published by St Louis University, St Louis, Missouri, USA.

Father P. Johanns, 'Introduction to the Vedanta', *Catholic Press*, Ranchi, India, 1943. 'Akimcanna: Self-Naughting', *New Indian Antiquary*, III (1940), pp 1-16.

'Kha and Other Words Denoting Zero in Connection with the Metaphysics of Space', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, VII (1934), pp 487-497.

'Intention', *The American Bookman*, I, 1, Winter 1944, pp 41-48.

Introduction, *It All Goes Together, Selected Essays by Eric Gill*, New York, 1944.

TO FATHER GERALD VANN, OP

March 18, 1947

Dear Gerald Vann:

I am naturally somewhat disarmed by your letter of the 10th. But I think the whole matter is too important to permit any intrusion of personal feeling. It is not only a question of sincerity but of responsibility, both to one's own and to any "other" religion. I say "other", but I try to avoid as far as possible the use of "religions" in the plural, the real question being one of the relation of differing forms of religion in the singular, just as it is a matter not of different truths, but of different ways of stating the *Una Veritas*. Thus, one could state the whole problem (from a Christian point of view) by asking "Is Islam religion?". For most Christians, of course, the answer is a foregone conclusion; but that is *their* misfortune. On the other hand, that very learned and devout Muslim, Prince Dara Shikuh, affirms that in their teachings he "did not find any difference, except verbal, in the way in which they sought and



comprehended Truth" (*Majmu'l Bahrein*, Introduction). I think that this is the position one would reach by really thorough comparison of any two forms of religion.

But to return to the immediate problem. You speak of reading sources. Unless I am assuming wrongly that you do not mean original Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Pali or Chinese sources, I must point out that such translations as are available in European languages are of a very varying quality. Perhaps the best in a way are those that come nearest to being "cribs". The trouble is that the earlier ones were made chiefly by missionaries for their own ends, and the later are mostly by rationalist-nominalist scholars to whom the language of the Schoolmen would have been as incomprehensible as that of the Eastern scriptures themselves. They simply did not know the English equivalents for the metaphysical terms that they found themselves coping with for the first time in their lives; not to mention that even they, too, had inherited from the "Christian civilisation" of Europe, in which they no longer believed, a superiority complex. One must be, therefore, exceedingly choosy in one's use of translations; and even if one learns one of the languages for oneself, still the literal reading will not reveal the content until one has reached the point of endowing the original keywords with all their pregnant significance, no longer attempting to think of them simply in terms of some one English equivalent.

All that you, and many others have to say positively about the content of Christian religion is well worth reading. But in making a *negative* statement with respect to any other form of religion can there be *any* value? You know how hard it is to "prove a negative". I think I have never made a negative statement about any religion. To make such negative statements necessarily arouses opposition, and that is the last thing one wishes. As I see it, the two greatest dangers to which Christianity is exposed at the present time are 1) its claim to exclusive truth and 2) its overemphasis on the supposedly historical event; perhaps these are the two main points on which Christianity could profit by the study of Hinduism.

As I said previously, I am not at all an uncritical admirer of Huxley, but I do think he has greatly grown in the last few years, and may go further yet.

Very sincerely,



Father Gerald Vann, OP, Blackfriars School, Laxton, England.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

November 28, 1945

Sir,

Mr Francis Glendenning is indeed in a predicament. If he assumes that "Christianity is the judgement upon all non-Christian religions", it becomes impossible for any Christian to teach Comparative Religion, as other subjects are taught, objectively. And yet, the understanding of other religions is an indispensable necessity for the solution by agreement of the economic and political problems by which the peoples of the world are at present more divided than united.

If Comparative Religion is to be taught as other sciences are taught, the teacher must surely have realised that his own religion, however true, is only one of those that are to be "compared". In other words, it will be "necessary to recognize that those institutions which are based on the same premises, let us say, the supernatural, must be considered together, our own amongst the rest", whereas "today, whether it is a question of imperialism, or of race prejudice, or of a comparison between Christianity and paganism, we are still preoccupied with the uniqueness . . . of our own institutions and achievements, our own civilization" (Ruth Benedict).

One cannot but ask whether the Christian whose conviction is ineradicable that his own is the *only* true faith can conscientiously permit himself to expound another religion, knowing that he cannot do so honestly; he will be almost certain, for instance, to use the expression "pantheism" or "polytheism" as terms of abuse without having considered the actual relevance or irrelevance to a given case. The only alternative, *at present*, is to leave the children to their ignorance, or to have Comparative Religion taught by non-Christians who, in Philo's words, *can* speak of the One God whom "with one accord all the Greeks and barbarians acknowledge together."

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

December 1946

Sir,

In further response to Mr Glendinning, I agree, of course, that no subject can be taught objectively, *absolutely*. It is, however, every teacher's duty to communicate the real content of the subject as objectively as possible. My point was that Christians commonly refer to other religions and use a few of their technical terms (such as *karma*, *nirvana*) without any personal knowledge of the connotations of the terms or the contexts in which they are employed; they rely on translations made either by propagandists or by scholars who are usually rationalists unacquainted with the terms of theology and indifferent or hostile to religion of all kinds; and that I regard as irresponsible and disingenuous.

As for the uniqueness of Christianity: in the first place, this can only be a matter of faith, not of historical certainty; one cannot have it both ways because, as Aristotle says, factual knowledge can be only of what is normal, not of exceptions. In the second place, I can only say that I am happy to disclaim uniqueness for my own beliefs, and that I can, and often do, defend the truths of Christianity accordingly. I am very sure that it redounds to the greater glory of God that *Una veritas in variis signis varie resplendet*.

AKC

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

January 8, 1946

Sir,

—I am afraid that Gens thoroughly misunderstands my position. In fact, I agree with him in almost everything. I never maintained and I do not hold that Comparative Religion, or even one's own, can be taught "as other sciences are taught". I said that Comparative Religion must be taught with at least as much regard for the truth as teachers of science usually have, and objectively in this sense, that the scriptures of the "other" re-

ligions must not be misconstrued. I fully agree that no one can teach religion, whether his own or another's or even talk "sense" about religion until religion has been a real experience in his own life. But for the teaching of truth about other religions it is not enough, however indispensable, to have had experience of one's own; it is also necessary to be as familiar with the texts of the other religions as one is (or should be) with those of one's own. What I complain of is that Christian writers (who often rely upon translations that have been made by scholars who, learned as they may be so far as language goes, are rationalists and quite ignorant both of religious experience and of the traditional terms in which it has been described) continually make use of the technical terms of other religions while knowing nothing personally of their etymology, history or use in the original contexts. We find, for example, "Maya" rendered by "illusion"; but Maya is that "art", or in Jacob Boehme's sense "magic" by which the Father manifests himself; the analogues of Maya being Greek *Sophia* or Hebrew *Hochma*, that "wisdom" or "cunning" by which God operates. We find "Nirvana" rendered by "annihilation" (no one stops to ask of what?), though the word means "despiration", as Meister Eckhart uses the term. I accuse the majority of Christian writers of a certain irresponsibility, or even levity, in their references to other religions. I should never dream of making use of a Gospel text without referring to the Greek, and considering also the earlier history of the Greek words employed, and I demand as much of Christian writers.

As for Folklore and Mythology, these, indeed, are sources of sacred knowledge, but to understand them requires something more than a collector's or cataloguer's capacities. I have no respect whatever for the approaches such as those of Frazer or Levy-Bruhl and often have said so. I am far, indeed, from denying that heresies are current, and may arise anywhere, or that they do arise when people "think for themselves". In reality, this is not a matter of thinking at all, but of understanding. I agree with Blake that "there is no natural religion". What I regard as the proper end of Comparative Religion is the demonstration of fundamental truths by a cloud of witnesses. Our task is one of collation rather than comparison. I agree with Gens that "Comparative Religion" is a rather unfortunate phrase, since it is not really "religions" but *religion*



that we are talking about. What we are really comparing is the idioms or symbols in which different peoples at different times have clothed the revelations of Himself that God has given them. The idioms differ (although far less than is commonly supposed) because "nothing can be known but in accordance with the mode of the knower", but what variety there is in no way infringes the truth propounded by St Ambrose, that "all that is true, by whomsoever (and however) it has been said, is from the Holy Ghost", or, as St Augustine says, "from Him whose throne is in heaven, and [who] teaches in the heart."

AKC

TO PROFESSOR ARTHUR BERRIEDALE KEITH

1937

Dear Professor Keith:

I am always appreciative of your tolerant attitude towards my "idealistic" approach. I am of course ready to agree that in an article like "Man's last end" (which, by the way, will be printed in *Asia*), I am considering both systems in their highest and deepest—*paramarthika*—significance. However, it is at least as necessary and proper that this should be done by some and for some, as it is to study religions also in their lower aspects. So my reply to your criticism would take this form (using your own words with very slight change). "After all these systems *are* what they mean to the deeper minds concerned with them, no less truly than they are what they mean to the average believer."

Just as in mediaeval exegesis the possibility of interpretation on at least four levels of reference (literal, moral, allegorical and anagogic) is always recognized, so I think one can approach the Indian texts from different points of view, each of which is legitimate—so long as one is perfectly conscious of what one is doing at the time.

With kind regards, very sincerely

Professor Arthur Berriedale Keith, University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

'The Indian Doctrine of Man's Last End', *Asia*, XXXVIII (1937), pp 186-213.

This letter was in response to one from Prof. Keith in which he commented as follows on said article: 'It is very brilliant and attests as usual your remarkable familiarity both with Christian and Indian thought. My only objection is to your conclusion in the form in which you have framed it. You have certainly established the fundamental identity of the views of certain profound aspects of Christianity and Hinduism, but these aspects make up but a very little part of what we understand as Hinduism and Christianity, and your conclusions would seem to be very far from reality to many Hindus and Christians alike. After all, these systems are not what they mean to the deeper minds concerned with them, but to the average believer. . . .'

TO ADE DE BETHUNE

May 6, 1937

Dear Ade de Bethune:

In the first place I enclose an extract from a letter from an English Catholic of considerable standing, though not a professional theologian.

Secondly, I should like to say that I have not the slightest interest in trying to "placate" anyone, but only in the Truth, which I regard as *One*. It would take too long to show here how hard it would be to say what doctrines (Matters of faith, as distinguished from matters of detail) are *not* common to Christianity and Hinduism (as well as other traditions, the Islamic for example). As to reincarnation, the doctrine has been profoundly misinterpreted, alike by scholars, Theosophists, and neo-Buddhists. On the other hand, the doctrine about what is under and what beyond the Sun is expounded in almost identical terms in both traditions.

I often find myself in the position of a defender of Catholic truth, and willingly enough; all the doctrines usually regarded as difficult seem to me to both intelligible and to be represented in Hinduism. On the other hand, though individual Protestants may be truly religious, I cannot seriously equate Protestantism with Christianity, and regard the Reformation as a *deformation*.

It is very easy to discover apparent contradictions between Christianity and Hinduism, but it requires a very thorough knowledge of both and perhaps a faith in both, to discover

whether these apparent contradictions are real. The principal difference in actual formulation is perhaps that Hinduism strictly speaking deals almost exclusively with the Eternal Birth, which in exoteric Christianity is, so to speak, only the more important of the two births, temporal and eternal.

In the last sentence I say "strictly speaking" because in Buddhism, which is an aspect of Hinduism, related to the orthodox tradition somewhat as Protestantism is to Catholicism, the manifestation of the Eternal Messiah (or as we express it, *Avatara*) is given a temporal form. I may add that my faith in the truth of Christianity ("faith" as defined by St Thomas) would not in the least be affected by a positive disproof of the historicity of the Christ, and I wonder if your friend could say as much.

I send you separately a few other papers of mine, of which I will ask you to return those on Exemplarism and on Rebirth and Omniscience, as I have but few copies. I send also 3 copies of "Man's Last End" for which you can send me 34 cents in stamps. I need hardly say that this paper, which was originally a broadcast and will be printed in *Asia* for May, was necessarily a very brief and undocumented statement; a summary, in fact, of some material collected for a comparison of Indian and Christian concepts of *deificatio*. The other papers will suffice to show that I have a background for what I say. I wonder indeed if your friend has anything like a similar background from which to speak of "what only a Christian believes", ie, for making statements as to what is *not* believed elsewhere. I often wonder why so many Christians resent the very thought that perhaps *the truth* has been known elsewhere, although expressed in other idioms. Since for me there is in the last analysis only one revealed tradition (of which the different forms are so many dialects), it is for me a source of interest and pleasure to recognize the same truths differently expressed at different times and by different peoples. Cf p 331 of the *Speculum* article. My article in the *Art Bulletin*, Vol. XVII (a translation and discussion of Ulrich Engleberti, *De Pulchro*), would probably interest you.

Yours sincerely,

Ade de Bethune, identified p 28. She had written to AKC about his article



'The Indian Doctrine of Man's Last End', raising objections both on her part and on the part of her (Protestant) friend about the correlation of Hindu and Christian positions. The enclosed 'extract', mentioned in the first paragraph, was from a letter by Eric Gill concerning the same article, and is repeated here: '. . . I am very glad to have it. It seems to me faultless, though I suppose the pious practising Christian would feel that it left him rather high and dry, as it leaves out (necessarily, from the point of view of metaphysics) all the personal loving contact which he has with Christ as man, brother, lover, bridegroom, friend. . . . I don't think there is anything at all wrong with what you have written: I think it is all just *true*, but it is written at a level removed from that of the ordinary consciousness and. . . .'

'Two Passages in Dante's *Paradiso*', *Speculum*, XI (1936), 327-328.

'Mediaeval Aesthetic. I. Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite and Ulrich Engelberti of Strassburg', *Art Bulletin*, XVII (1935), Pt 1, 31-47.

In later years, Dr Coomaraswamy changed his views on the orthodoxy of Buddhism, and would no longer have referred to it as 'Protestant'.

TO PROFESSOR MYER SCHAPIRO

October 18, 1946

Dear Schapiro:

I don't find much conflict between religions, except, of course when individuals are expressing individual opinions and misunderstandings. If understood according to Philo, the Jews would not have disagreed with the idea of "eternal creation"; no doubt, any "fundamentalist" would, but the fundamentalists on their side are as bad as some scientists (eg, Haldane who writes on "Time and Eternity" in the current *Rationalist* without ever even mentioning the traditional and almost universal definitions of eternity as *not everlasting* but now—this means, of course, that he is only talking about what he supposes eternity to mean, and is not dealing with the subject historically at all) are on theirs. I think also, it might be difficult to find a doctrine of the eternal fixity of species as such; most traditional philosophers as such (like many modern psychologists) regard the existence of "things" (men included) as postulate, useful as such for pragmatic purposes, but not such that one can say "is" of them; this is repeatedly pointed out in Greek and is equally Buddhist; Augustine also emphasizes the *mutability* of body and soul, almost in Buddhist terms.

Very sincerely,

Myer Schapiro, professor of art history, Columbia University, New York.

TO PROFESSOR SIDNEY HOOK

undated

Dear Prof Hook:

I have given a large part of my life to the study of comparative religion, using the original sources (Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, Pali and to some extent Persian). I deny *absolutely* your assertion in the *Nation* Jan 20th, that the elements of religion "must be thinned down to the vaguest phrases" if they are to be universally acceptable. On the contrary, the different scriptures are full of *precise* and *detailed* equivalents, and in fact, I myself hardly ever expound any doctrine from only a single source.

Very sincerely,

Sidney Hook, professor of philosophy, New York University, New York, USA.

TO PROFESSOR J. WACH

August 23, 1947

Dear Professor Wach:

I read your paper in the July *Journal of Religion* with much interest. For me, of course, theology is a "science" common to all religions, and not the private property of any. In view of Aquinas as cited in the enclosed, p 60, it would seem to me virtually impossible for any Roman Catholic to maintain that no non-Christian scripture can have been inspired. Indeed, from the point of view of those who are opposed to all religion, nothing could well be more laughable than for anyone to claim that his religion alone has been "revealed". I hold with Blake that "there is no natural religion" (which parallels your citations from Newman and Soderblom). I am sending a copy of your paper to a R. C. friend of mine in England who is

devoting himself to a consideration of this question: "What is to be the attitude of Roman Catholics to the Oriental religions as now better known than heretofore?"; for which purpose he has learnt Sanskrit himself. We are both agreed that neither of us is in search of a solution in terms of "latitudinarianism". Here I might also mention that I know two European brothers, one a Trappist monk, the other a leading Moslem; both are men of prayer; neither has any wish to convert the other; and know, too, of a learned and aged nun who said to us: "I see there is no necessity for you to be a Christian". The Hindu attitude might be expressed as follows: Hinduism "has outlived the Christian propaganda of modern times . . . . It is now able to meet any of these world religions on equal terms as their friend and ally in common cause" (*Renaissance of Hinduism*, D. S. Sharma, 1944, p 70). I have myself often said to Christians, "even if you are not on our side, we are on yours."

As regards the collation of doctrines, Christian and non-Christian, I think this task has so far only been *begun*. For example, who has ever stressed the Buddhist "Whoever would nurse me, let him nurse the sick" in relation to "In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . ye have done it unto Me"? Even as regards pre-Christian Greek, comparatively little has been done; mainly, I suppose, because such tasks are distasteful to most Christians. Of course one finds a similar attitude elsewhere also; there are *some* Indians who resent my own position, according to which there is nothing unique in Indian religion, apart from its "local color", ie, historical expression in the language of those whose religion it has been ("nothing can be known except in the mode of the knower"). There are, indeed, two kinds of persons; those who take pleasure in recognizing identities of doctrines, and those who they offend (and who, as Schopenhauer long ago pointed out, strive to show that when the same things are said in as nearly as possible the same way, the meaning is different).

In the case of the Hindu-Moslem problem in India (which is now mainly a political rather than a religious matter), the solution can only be found . . . starting from the position unequivocally affirmed by Jahangir and Dara Shikosh that "their Vedanta is the same as our Tasawwuf". It is from men like these (and like Plutarch) that we have to learn how to tackle the problems of "comparative religion". By the way, I do not



think this is such an unfortunate term, because it is significant that the word religion is used in the singular; comparative religion and the history of religions are not quite the same thing. The former, I think, can only be studied by men who are themselves religious.

Very sincerely,

Joachim Wach, professor at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, USA.

Jahangir and Dara Shikosh, see p 48.

TO JOHN CLARK ARCHER

Date uncertain, 1945 or '46

Dear Professor Archer:

I greatly appreciate your review of my "Recollection. . ." and "... Transmigrant" in *Review of Religion*. I would only like to say, I think you must be aware that I am *anything but* indifferent to "religion". But I look to God to satisfy my head as well as my heart, and it seems to me perfectly legitimate in any particular study to confine oneself to the intellectual aspects of one's belief, since one is not, for the moment, concerning oneself with the active life. At the same time the intellectual aspects lead, in fact, to the same practical conclusions in ethics as those which you defend. "Love thy neighbour as thyself": it was long ago pointed out by Deussen [that] this holds good *a fortiori* if thy neighbour is, essentially, thyself, if what we love either in ourself or in others is not really the individual, but the immanent deity in both. This was also Ficino's conception of "Platonic love". Then, I would call your attention to the fact that the term "Vedanta" occurs in the *Svetasvetara* and *Mundaka Upanishads*, and does not apply only to Sankara's philosophy. I gave enough questions, I think, to show that his "only transmigrant" dictum had ample older authority. Lastly, if, as Aristotle says, "eternal beings are not in time", I cannot see how they can be thought of as "continually learning", as temporal or aeviternal beings might be; the latter, indeed, in Buddhist doctrine, are notably thought of as capable of further

learning and of rising higher. By the way, also, "many summits" would imply to me a polytheism; but perhaps I miss your meaning here. You may be interested to know I shall be reviewing your *Sikhs* . . . , mostly with cordial appreciation, but with criticism of a few minor points (esp Rumi's supposed belief in reincarnation, and the reference to Buddhism as a *nastika* system). Incidentally, I wonder if you have ever noticed that the Buddha is several times referred to in canonical texts as *saccanama*, and that all his "undergraduate" disciples are *sekha*.

Very sincerely,

John Clark Archer, Hooper Professor of Comparative Religion, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

'Recollection, Indian and Platonic' and 'On the One and Only Transmigrant', both by WKC, were published as Supplements to the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXIV (1944).

*The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, P. O. Kristeller, New York, 1943.

*The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyahs*, by John Clark Archer, reviewed by AKC, JAOS, LXVII, 1947.

*Nastika*, reductionist, nothing more than. . . Dr Coomaraswamy contributed significantly towards dispelling notions of Buddhism as merely a heresy of Hinduism.

TO JOHN CLARK ARCHER

May 21, 1947

My dear Professor Archer:

Many thanks for your kind and patient letter. I will take up the points in the same order. I did not mean to suggest that you had stated any direct connection of Sikhism with Buddhism, but in this connection thought it worth while myself to call attention to a remarkable continuity of the Indian tradition in thinking of God as truth, a tendency extending from the *Rgveda* to Gandhi (for I might have cited also *Rgveda* V.25.2: *sa hi satyah*).

Regarding caste, the difference between "exclusively" and "utterly different" as in the referents. That part of Hocart's book which deals with caste elsewhere than in India does *not* deal with "class distinctions" but with the real equivalents of caste elsewhere, and I therefore cited him in illustration of the



view that caste is not "exclusively Indian". On the other hand, I said that caste is "utterly different" from the *class* distinctions that are so conspicuous in the so-called democracies. I did not, therefore, contradict myself.

As regards Buddha, you repeat that he "denied the reality of God"; and . . . this was what I contradicted, and still do. I expressly omitted to point out that he believed in Gods, thinking that would have been irrelevant to the actual point. I am thoroughly familiar with, I think, all the Pali sources bearing on this point, and am satisfied that he not only believed in Brahma (as distinct from Brahmā), but was himself "Brahma-become" (having been a Brahmā in previous births).

You said that Nanaka was "not a *nastik* with respect to God"; but that the Buddha was. I can't agree. But to prove my point would amount to a short article with full citations.

Regarding the "only transmigrant" (Sankara's phrase, not mine): I see nothing strange in the view that *all* things are infused by a power that operates in all. In fact, I should have thought that most Christians would think that.

I must apologize for seeming to *credit* you (I use the word advisedly) with the sentence ending "one perfect source".

No doubt your diagnosis of our different temperaments is more or less correct. But I think you will allow that I never express personal opinions, but speak always *samūla*, always citing authorities. What I would say is that I do not think a "realistic, dualistic, individualistic" mental make-up looks at all like one naturally adapted to interpret Indian or related types of thought without distortion.

Sincerely and cordially,

PS: I can't agree that we are saying the same things about Rumi; you said explicitly that he believed in reincarnation, and I produced chapter and verse to show that he did not do so, in the now commonly accepted animistic interpretation of the word. Nor can I agree with you that any Sufi (or Vedantist) identified *himself* (Boehme's "that which thou callest 'I' or 'myself' ") with God; it is the immanent God *in* "us", not "this man, so-and-so", that can be identified with God, and must be, if there is to be any sense to the faith of those (like Cusa, and the Greek Orthodox theologians) who consider man's last end one



of theosis by the elimination of *omnis alteritatis et diversitatis*.

Sincerely,

John Clark Archer, Hooper Professor of Comparative Religion, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA. Dr Archer had written to AKC: 'I myself find it difficult to associate so intimately the *Rgveda*, Plotinus and St Thomas . . . . But a mystical sense disregards time and space . . . . Your article drips secretions of the mystical. I am myself somewhat more realistic in my reading of the *Rgveda*, and of the Upanishads also.' Under this latter, AKC wrote: *pour rire, si non pleurer!*— 'to laugh, if not rather to cry!'

Nankar, or Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion.

*Nastik*, a 'nothing more-ist' or reductionist.

*Brahma*, the Supreme Principle.

*Brahmā*, first named in the Hindu *Trimurti* or triple manifestation of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Siva*. The word *brahmā* also refers to a member of the highest of the four traditional Hindu castes.

TO GERSHOM G. SCHOLEM

November 9, 1944

Dear Professor Scholem:

I have been reading your *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* with the greatest interest, and am only sorry I have been unable to procure a copy here. If, by chance, it is still available in Jerusalem, I should be very much obliged if you would direct your bookseller to send me a copy, with the bill.

*Tsimtsum* seems to me to correspond exactly to William Blake's expression "contracted and identified into variety". Throughout I have been interested in the Indian parallels, which I have long since learnt to expect everywhere, since metaphysics is *one* science, whatever the local coloring it takes on. In this connection I am sending you a copy of my article on "Recollection, Indian and Platonic" and Transmigration, in which I touched on the treatment of "recollection" by Jewish writers. You will see that the (true) Indian doctrine of transmigration is similar to that of *gilgul* (= *Ar tanassul*). I am dealing with the whole subject further in an article on "Gradation and Evolution" which will appear in *Isis*.

Very sincerely,

Gershom G. Scholem, professor of Jewish mysticism, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and author of *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Jerusalem, 1941. 'Recollection, Indian Platonic' and 'on the One and Only Transmigrant', published as Supplements to the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXIV, 1944.

'Gradation and Evolution', *Isis*, XXXV, 1944.

TO HELEN CHAPIN

December 22, 1945

Dear Helen:

... I think you (like Aldous Huxley) are much too much afraid of what you call "sugar"; and on the other hand, I suspect some trace of "sugar" in your "love of nature". Of course, we all "love nature"; but we don't have to go so far as to exclaim that "only God can make a tree", as if he was not just as interested in making fleas. Blake was "afraid that Wordsworth was fond of nature"; and as Eckhart says, "to find nature (ie, *natura naturans*) as she is herself, all her forms must be shattered."

I see no sugar in Ramakrishna! Bhakti in the *Bhagavad Gita* is "service" (in the sense of giving to anyone what is their due, service as a servant) or "attendance", rather than "love" literally. "Platonic love" is not the love of others "for themselves", but of what in them is divine, and as this is identical with what in us is divine, is just as much self-love (ie, love of Self) as love of others; the notion of "I" and that of "others" is (as in Buddhism) equally delusive, and what we need is not "altruism" but Self-love in the Aristotelian and in the Scholastic sense.

Very sincerely,

Helen Chapin, Bryn Mawr College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA; see table of contents for other letters.

Ramakrishna refers to the major nineteenth century Indian saint, and to the account of his life and teaching, *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, New York. *Bhakti*, usually translated as *love* or *devotion* (to God). For a classical Indian exposition of *bhakti*, see *Narada Bhakti Sutras*, translated by Swami Tyagisanada, Madras, India, 1972.

TO LIGHT, LONDON

May 21, 1942

Sir,

Apropos of the article on "Reincarnation" by Mrs Rhys Davids and the leading article "Of Rebirth" in your issue of January 8, 1942, and with special reference to the remark "In India it is a cardinal point of Hindu Dogma", may I say that while there is in India a doctrine of Transmigration (in the sense of passage from states of being to other states of being), Reincarnation (in the sense of the return of individuals to incarnation on earth) is not a Hindu doctrine. The Hindu doctrine is, in the words of Sankaracarya that "There is no other transmigrant (*samsarin*) but the Lord." That this is the teaching of the Upanishads and older texts could be amply supported by many citations, and follows directly from the position that *our* powers are "merely the names of *his* acts", who is "the only seer, hearer, thinker, etc, in us", and from the view, common to Hinduism and Buddhism that it is the greatest of all delusions to consider "I am the doer." In successive births and deaths it is Brahma, not "I", that comes and goes; "goes" when we "give up the ghost" and as this spirit "returns to God who gave it." This is also the teaching of Christ, who says that if we would follow him we must hate our souls, and that "no man has ascended into heaven save he who came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, which is heaven."

The transmigrating Lord occupies, indeed, bodies of which the character is casually and fatally determined, but he "never becomes anyone", and it follows that no one who is still anyone can be "joined unto the Lord" so as to be "one spirit". For nothing that has had a beginning in time can come to be immortal; if there is a way out it can only be in the realisation that "I live, yet *not I*, but Christ (or Brahma, or by whatever other name we speak of God) in me."

Surely, before we discuss "Reincarnation" we ought to be sure that a doctrine of Reincarnation has been maintained by anyone but the Theosophists.

AKC



Mrs A. F. Rhys Davids, Surrey, England, Director of the Pali Text Society.  
The article in question had appeared in *Light* (London), LXII, No 3182,  
January 8, 1942.

TO RUTH CAMPBELL

January 6, 1938

Dear Miss Campbell:

Many thanks for your kind letter and the careful attention you have given my article. I should like to say first that your "office dogs" missed the point as regards "transmigration". What I said was that *reincarnation* was not taught and represented an impossibility. This does not exclude the validity of metempsychosis on the one hand (for which by the way, "Hermes" uses migration, not *trans*-migration) and of transmigration on the other. I had thought I made it very clear that transmigration has nothing to do with time or place, but takes place entirely "within you", and is from the periphery to the centre of being. I believe this is made so clear in the article that only a re-reading is required.

As to the "editorial" problem, how would it be to print the first part in smaller type with a footnote to the effect that the reader may prefer to read the second part first. I feel myself that to scatter the first part through the second would too much interrupt the sequence of ideas; and that on the other hand it is *very* necessary to in some way set aside our notions of "philosophy" before we can begin to grasp the *philosophia perennis*, the theme of which is rather pneumatological than psychological, and gnostic rather than epistemological.

I might add that a "limitation by Christianity" would not stand in the way of understanding, if this "Christianity" were a real knowledge (of Christianity as understood by Dionysius, Bonaventura, Thomas and Witelof, as well as Eckhart). My experiences of "Christians" is that it is *very* rare to meet with one who has any real conception of what "Christianity" means.

Perhaps you would let me know your view on these notes.

Very sincerely,

Ruth Campbell, assistant editor of *The American Scholar* (the Phi Beta Kappa quarterly), New York, USA.

'The Vedanta and the Western Tradition', *The American Scholar*, VIII, 1939.

ANONYMOUS

Date uncertain

Sir:

Apropos of your remarks on Reincarnation in your issue of June 4, may I say that I am rather familiar with Plato, Plotinus, Philo, Hermes, etc, and that my writings abound with citations from these authors. I share the view of René Guénon that all apparent references to reincarnation of the individual on this earth are to be understood metaphorically. This was also the view of Hierocles, stated in his Commentary on the *Golden Verses of Pythagoras*, V.53. Passages can be cited also from Christian and Islamic authors which appear to enunciate a doctrine of reincarnation, yet cannot and do not really do so.

An adequate treatment of the subject would take a large book. It must first be realized that in the traditional philosophy our everyday life is not a being but a becoming, a perpetual dying and being reborn; that is one kind of "reincarnation". Then that from the same point of view a man is "reborn" in his children, who will represent him when he himself has transmigrated elsewhere. And finally, that both the Vedanta, and in connection with the doctrine of "Recollection", Plato maintained that it is not the individual soul, but the Universal Self that transmigrates, entering into every form of existence whatever; in the words of Sankara, "Verily, there is none but the Lord that transmigrates." We cannot, in fact, even begin to discuss the problem until we have arrived at some understanding of the question "Who and what am 'I'?" Before we can ask whether or not "we" reincarnate or transmigrate, we must make it clear to which of the "two selves", mortal or immortal, that all traditions, whether Greek, Christian or Oriental assume to coexist in "us", we are referring. Most of the Indian texts that seem to speak of a "reincarnation" are either descriptive of this present life, or any kind of living, or rather of the Life that is common to all things, and passes on from one to another

with absolute impartiality. That is not, of course, to deny that a laity, taking for granted an identity of the individual soul throughout life, have never assumed that this "soul" or "personality" reincarnates; we simply mean to say that such a point of view is unorthodox, whether in West or East.

I cannot, of course, agree with you that East is East and West is West, as was said by Kipling, of whom the late F. W. Bain remarked that "Hindu India was for him a book sealed with seven seals." There is, indeed, a gulf dividing what is "modern" from what is truly Oriental; but that is not a geographical distinction, or one that could have been recognized before the fourteenth century. All that Kipling meant was that he had never understood the East. May I commend to you René Guénon's *East and West*, and in particular the chapter entitled "Agreement on Principles"? There are many different ways of saying the same thing, but [this] does not imply contradictory truths. In your view, either the East or the West must be all wrong; and that is only really true if we are contrasting, not East and West, but the modern anti-traditional world with the traditional cultures based on universal principles.

AKC

TO PROFESSOR E. R. DODDS

June 19, 1942

Dear Professor Dodds:

Many thanks for your letter of May 8. I agree that Plato's "mortal soul" cannot be reincarnated. His "imortal soul" is essentially the "divine part" of us. If this perpetually reincarnates it is in its universal aspect and just in the sense that for the Vedanta, "God is the *only* transmigrator, forsooth" (Sankara on *Brahma Sutra* 1.1.5, and supported by innumerable texts). Hence *Katha Upanishad* speaks of those who are liberated as "filled for embodiment in the worlds"—that would be in the sense that for Plato "Soul" (not a soul) "governs all things". But the divine extension which is temporally determined by a given individuality (by association with a mortal psycho-



physical becoming) can be liberated from its *necessitas coactionis* and then operates only according to *necessitas infallibilitatis*, ie, its own nature as it is in itself.

If "we" can identify our consciousness of being with it in this free aspect, then "we" are liberated from "reincarnation" in any pejorative sense. And finally, this is the absolute liberation: because the world process itself is part and parcel of *our* way of thinking and from the eternal and divine point of view is not a process but God's knowledge of himself nowever and apart from the time that is a factor in any concept of re-incarnation.

I believe that this, and the related doctrine of *anamnesis* are two points in which the agreement of Plato and Vedanta is most fundamental. *Anamnesis*, furthermore, makes *pronoia* intelligible; since it precisely an omnipresence of "soul" (ie, "spirit") to all things that implies omniscience or "Providence" (Skr, *prajna*, equivalent of *pronoia* etymologically and in meaning).

Sincerely,

E. R. Dodds, lecturer in classics, University College, Reading, and author of *Select Passage Illustrating Neoplatonism*, London, 1923.

TO H.G. RAWLINSON, CIE

December 6, 1946

Dear Rawlinson:

I think I am familiar with all the passages where *dipa* means "lamp", or means "island", or is ambiguous. The ambiguity is not important at D.II.101; the point is that *atta-sarana viharatha* is an injunction to "so walk as having Self for refuge". Cf S. III. 143, "Take refuge in the Self"; D.II. 120: "I (Buddha) have made self my refuge; *Vis*, 393 and *Vin* 1. 23: "Seek for the Self". Surely one does not as a Buddhist resort to or take refuge in the composite self "that is not my Self" (*na me so atta*, *passim*).

Besides all that, there are many contexts in which there is a clear distinction of the two selves: *Dh* 380 (Self the Lord and Goal of self); *A*.1.149, 249, 4.9 (the Great or Fair, distinguished from the little or foul self); *UdA* 340 (Self identified with

Tathagata); J.6.253 (Self the Charioteer); also the many passages on being "Self guarded" or "Self-blamed", in all of which cases one must remember that *nil agit in seipsum*.

I'm just now writing a longish piece on "reincarnation", arguing that it was never anywhere a doctrine, but only a popular belief, bound up with belief in the Ego of which the Buddha denied the reality; in the case of Buddhism, I agree with scholars like T. W. Rhys Davids, B. C. Law, D. T. Suzuki, etc, all of whom deny that reincarnation was a Buddhist doctrine. Incidentally, the word itself does not appear in English before 1850, and it smacks of "Theosophy".

Very glad to hear you got over your illness.

Very sincerely,

H. G. Rawlinson, identified on p. 39.

"Reincarnation" was incomplete at the time of AKC's death and has not been published.

TO WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING

February 1942

Dear Professor Hocking:

Further with respect to reincarnation: while it would be impossible to treat the whole subject adequately in a letter, it does occur to me to say that very many texts of the Upanishads, etc, only appear to assert a reincarnation (in the now accepted sense of the word) only because we have that notion in our minds. You will be able, of course, to refer to *Bhagavad Gita* II.22, which I suppose most readers would think of as a statement about reincarnation. But observe that Plato and Eckhart use almost the same words, with respect to the nature of this present life itself. Thus, *Phaedo* 87D, E: "each soul wears out many bodies, especially if the man lives many years. For if the body is constantly changing and being destroyed while the man still lives, and the soul is always weaving anew that which wears out, then when the soul perishes, it must necessarily have on its last garment" (the case

for the soul's not perishing resting, of course, upon the fact that it survives each of these changes of garment, and if so, why not the last of them?). And Eckhart (Pfeiffer, p 530) "Aught is suspended from the divine essence; its progression is matter, wherein the soul puts on new forms and puts off her old ones. The change from one into the other is her death, and the ones she dons she lives in". In Hume's . . . *Upanishads*, he often assumes that the subject is "this man" when it is really "Man", and hence he thinks that *we* reincarnate, when really, as Sankara says, "There is, in truth, no other transmigrant than the Lord."

Very sincerely,

William Ernest Hocking was professor of philosophy at Harvard University.

TO WILLIAM RALPH INGE

Date uncertain

Dear Mr Inge:

As regards *karma*, literally *act*, "work", it is most important to recognize that this concept has *no* inevitable connection with the doctrine of "reincarnation". Buddhism does not differ from other traditional religions in holding that "nothing happens by chance". That is, every happening has antecedent causes, and becomes in its turn a cause of subsequent events. Karma then, as implying *hetu-vāda*, literally "actiology" per se, involves nothing but a doctrine of the invincible operation of "mediate causes", and might be described as just as much a Christian as an Indian doctrine—just as also *kṛtvā* = potentiality, and *kṛtatṛtyah* (Pali *katam karanīyam*) = "all in act". Perhaps as good an enunciation of karma as one could wish for is St Augustine's "as a mother is pregnant with the unborn offspring, so the world itself is pregnant with the causes of unborn beings" (*De Trin* III.9; cf also St Thom Aquinas, *Sum Theol* I. 115.2 ad 4).

If one believes in "reincarnation", then of course one thinks of it in terms of this same causality that governs the presently observed sequence of events. But karma does not presuppose "reincarnation" (as ordinarily understood). What Buddhist or



Hindu liberation is "from" is precisely "becoming", present or future, ie, from mutability; body and soul (as also pointed out by St Augustine) being mutable; and in accordance with the whole traditional philosophy for which the use of the word "is", implying being, is improper for anything that changes. In precisely the same way for Buddhism, the body and the soul are "not my Self".

Hence the necessity of self-naughting (*denegat seipsum*) if one is to "be oneSelf"—self-naughting = Self realization. The psycho-physical personality, EGO, self, being subject to the operation of mediate causes, ie, "fate" (cf St Thom Aquin [*Sum Theol* I-I.116, contra, 2] "Fate is in the created causes themselves- . . . . fate is the ordering of second causes to effects foreseen by God"). Once the Ego illusions have been overcome, the whole problem of "becoming", whether now or hereafter, loses its meaning; explicitly, therefore, the Buddhist Arhant can never ask: What was *I*? What shall I become? What am *I*? In fact, for Christian and Islamic mystics equally, the words *I*, *Is*, can properly be said only of God, and none else has any right to say *I am*, though one may do so conventionally for purely pragmatic purposes of every day existence, but always with the mental reservation that (as modern psychologists have also recognized) *I* is nothing but a postulate made for convenience and reference to a sequence of behaviours.

Sincerely,

William Ralph Inge, CVO, DD, was Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, London, Honorary Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge; and of Hertford College, Oxford. He was a Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, author of the two volume *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (London, 1923) and one of the most popular ecclesiastical writers of his day.

TO DOÑA LUISA COOMARASWAMY

1932

. . . The *Rgveda* teaches resurrection (in a glorified body), not reincarnation in the current sense of the word. It is doubtful if "reincarnation" is taught even in Buddhism, where it is expressly emphasized that nothing (no *thing*) is carried over

from a past to a future existence, though the latter is determined by the former; ie, as far as births on earth are concerned, it is another *nama-rupa* (individuality) that will reap the rewards of *our* conduct. The expression "rebirth as an animal" will then, for example, mean that if all men behaved in a purely animal fashion, the result would be that in time, animals only would be born on earth, life as determined by mediate causes (*karma*) would find none but animal expression here.

Roughly speaking it is not the personality that is reincarnated, not an individual but a type: *Le roi est mort, vive le roi*, not Henry IV is *mort*, *vive* Henry IV. What is transmitted is not an entity but a type of energy (*virya*); practically, "seed", as in "seed of Abraham" . . . .

Doña Luisa Coomaraswamy, wife of AKC, spent two years in India studying Hindi and Sanskrit. The above was part of a personal letter, from which personal material has been deleted.

TO WESLEY E. NEEDHAM

May 20, 1945

Deat Mr Needham:

Many thanks for letting me see the readings. I agree with the translation, except I would say "rite", not "ceremony". By no means are all ceremonies *rites*, and while rites must be *formal*, they need not be ceremonious. I made myself a copy, as the transliteration will help with other Nepal texts.

I am afraid I distrust Theosophy as a whole, though in fact, I had a high regard for Mrs Besant personally. The notion of a personal physical rebirth is not orthodox Brahmanism or original Buddhism, since there is no psychic constant "I" that could be reborn. I treat of this briefly in my "One and Only Transmigrant" (JAOS Suppl 3, 1944, p 28), though a fuller treatment is needed. All scholars are agreed that a doctrine of individual physical rebirth is not Vedic, and this fact alone should give one pause. I agree that some have been led to Eastern thought through meeting with Theosophy, but the best of these have realized that they must go to the *sources*

*themselves* sooner or later. I am sure you will not mind my stating my exact position in the matter, even if you differ!

Very sincerely,

Mr Wesley Needham, West Haven, Connecticut, USA.

TO WILLIAM RALPH INGE

February 15, 1947

Dear Dean Inge:

It so happens that I am writing a book on "Reincarnation". In your admirable work on Plotinus, I find the extraordinary statement that in India there was "no deliverance from rebirth (and) hence the Buddhist revolt against the doctrine." The first part of this phrase seems to me to be entirely meaningless; and as regards the second, while it is true that in early Buddhism, it is taught that reincarnation is not an ultimate truth, but only a *façon de parler* bound up with the animistic belief in the reality of the mutable "self"; this cannot be called a "revolt". I had to write the little footnote that is attached.

I do feel that one ought not to speak at all of other religions than one's own unless one has a knowledge of their scriptures comparable to that which one has of one's own. This is especially true as regards Indian religions, where one who does not read Sanskrit or Pali has to rely on translations made by scholars who are themselves usually nominalists and rationalists, quite ignorant of the technical terms of theology and metaphysics. The result of relying on them is only to add to the already too prevalent misunderstandings. In my own writings, in which I constantly correlate India, etc, doctrines with Christian, what I say is based on reading the Christian sources in Latin and Greek, and never on what non-Christians may have said "about" Christianity. Do you not think that Christian writers ought to feel a similar responsibility when speaking of the teachings of other religions?

Footnote: As regards your question, whether the concept of Regeneration (transformation, resurrection or other equivalent



phrasing) is absent from any Eastern religion, I could only answer "No" for Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, so far as my positive knowledge goes. But it would certainly surprise me if this idea could be shown to be or have been wanting anywhere, even in "primitive religions".

I know my letter was strongly worded; still, it could be that, even if it gave you a "shock", that might have its uses; a shock is perhaps just what most Christians need at the present day. Anyhow, many thanks for your kind and gentle reply. And incidentally, I am sending you a little book of mine, just out, and in which some of these matters are touched on.

What I say above, by the way, does not exclude the possibility of making sincere mistakes in one's positive interpretation of the doctrines of another form of religion; for example, Bernard Kelley tells me I somewhat misinterpreted the Christian meaning of "transubstantiation"; in reply, I told him by all means to correct me in his review. And as I have also said before, I naturally agree that the necessity for a confutation of heresies may arise anywhere; as the ethymology of the word is, of thinking what one *likes* to think instead of the sometimes hard things that one ought to think.

Very sincerely,

William Ralph Inge. identified p. 126.

Bernard Kelley, identified p. 20.

*Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought*, London, 1946.

TO BERNARD KELLY

February 10, 1947

Dear Bernard Kelly:

Yours of 4.2.46 with two citations from *Hinduism and Buddhism*. As regards "the universal is real, the particular unreal", I don't think we need have much trouble. I was equating reality with being. So I mean what St Augustine means when he says of created things that *Te comparata nec pulchra, nec bona, nec sunt*. Such being as they have, such reality therefore, is by participation, not of themselves. "Exis-

tent" = *ex alio sistens*. Again Augustine (*Conf VII. 11*): *esse quidem, quoniam abs te sunt, non esse autem, quoniam id quod es non sunt*. Moreover, at least "in so far as men are sinners, they have not being at all" (St Thom, *Sum Theol* I.20.2 and 4). The general principle I have in mind is that things that are always changing (like body and soul), St Augustine, *Sermo* 241 2.2; 3.3, cf *Conf* 7.11: "that trully is, which doth immutably remain"—it cannot be said of them that they *are*.

Secondly, on the question whether the immortality of a created soul is conceivable. I had supposed that is an inviolable axiom, that "whatever has a beginning must have an end", also that mutability and mortality are inseparable—"all change is a dying" (Plato, Eckhart, etc). So we attribute immutability, immortality, and no beginning to God. My point in saying "impossible" would be that God cannot do anything contrary to his own nature, and that to accuse Him (as I should express it) of making anything at a given time that should not also end in time would amount to a kind of blasphemy, based on a false interpretation of the principle that "all things are possible with God", which possibility does not actually include self-contradiction, such as would be involved if, for example, we thought of Him as making things that have been not have been.

If the "soul" (as St Augustine and the Buddha say) is mutable, never selfsame from moment to moment, what can one mean by "its" immortality? What is "it"? Surely, like my own personal name, only a word which conveniently summarizes a sequence of changing behaviour and experiences. I have always, of course, in mind the trinity of body, soul and spirit; the latter is the Spirit of God that becomes the spirit of man (St Thom Aquinas, *sum Theol* I.38.2) which we "give up when we die" (as *Ps* 104, 29; *Eccl* 12, 7). When Jesus died he "gave up the ghost" (John 19, 30), and so do other men (Acts V.5 etc). If, then, *we* would be immortal, we must be born again of the Spirit, "and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit" (*John* III, 3–8, cf I Cor VI, 17); in the meantime our continued existence depends on the continued presence of the Giver (St Bonaventura *I Sent* d 37, p 1, a1, conc). As in *Prasna Upanishad* VI.3: it is a question of "in whom shall I be departing" (in myself, or in the Self of the self, or Soul of the soul). I do not need to tell you that *psyche* and *psychikos* are generally speaking



pejorative terms in the *New Testament*, or that the Word of God extends to "the severing of soul from Spirit". I could quote much more, but in sum I cannot see what authority there is for the supposition that *anything* created can never cease to exist; and if you could point to one, it would irrevocably show that the truths of reason and the truth of Christian revelation can never be reconciled, which for me would be a horrible conclusion, since I hold that both are from Him.

Kindest regards,

Bernard Kelly, Windsor, England; identified on p. 20.

TO DR P. F. VAN DEN DAELE

September 30, 1946

Dear Sir:

I appreciate your inquiry, but I suppose I must say that I cannot agree with your philosophy. I certainly hold with the Traditional philosophy that "nothing in the world happens by chance". I can only think about free will on the basis of the traditional doctrine *duo sunt in homine* (Ego and Self, Outer and Inner Man), which doctrine is presupposed in all such expressions as "self-control", "self-government", "be yourself"; these imply the duality because one and the same thing cannot be both active and passive at one and the same time in the same relations. For me, free will means *willingness* to obey the dictates of the inner man, whatever the likes or dislikes of the outer man might drive him to "choose" or "prefer".

As to whether phenomena are "illusions" depends a good deal on what we mean by "illusions". It must be admitted that things are not always what they seem to be, and in such cases (the skeptic and Vedantic example being that of the rope mistaken for a snake) the phenomenon as it presents itself is certainly illusory. It has always been recognized, too, that because of the ceaseless change that all things in time and space undergo, it cannot be truly said that they are, but only that they become. The word phenomena always implies an "of"; appearances, but "of what?" Any reality the phenomena have



must derive from the reality of that "of which" the phenomena are the appearances. "Evolution", too, involves the question, "unfolding of what?"

On this subject see my article in the current issue of *Main Currents* ("Gradation, Evolution and Reincarnation"). On the whole, I think it best that I return your booklets.

Very sincerely,

Dr P. F. van Den Daele, D. C. Battle Creek, Michigan, USA, had written to AKC to enlist his support for his 'new philosophy', the 'Absolute and Relative Philosophy', which among other points held that 'phenomena in all their endless variations are not illusions but a grand reality. . .', and that 'chance is not an unscientific concept, but that it plays an important part in the vast drama of evolution throughout this entire universe. . . .'  
'Gradation, Evolution and Reincarnation', *Main Currents in Modern Thought*, IV, 1946; reprinted in *Blackfriars*, XXVII, 1948.

TO BERNARD KELLY

April 9, 1947

Dear Bernard Kelly:

. . . As regards "soul", surely it will depend on which of the senses in which the word is used whether or not it be anathema to deny its immortality. One cannot overlook that the Word of God "extends to the sundering of soul from Spirit" (*Heb* IV, 12). Now, it is God "who only hath immortality" (*I Tim* VI, 16). Can, therefore, anything but "the Spirit of God (that) dwelleth in you" (*I Cor* III, 16) be immortal? This Spirit is the Psychopomp; surely there is no hope of immortality for the soul as such, but only if she dies and is reborn in and of the Spirit? When St Paul says "I live, yet not I, but Christ [liveth] in me" he is expressly denying *himself*; and one can associate "his" immortality with the saying "no one hath ascended into heaven, save he which came down from heaven, even the Son of (the) Man which is in heaven". So, while there is a sense in which one can speak of man's "immortal soul", I think that in view of the fact that men are most unconscious of the ambiguity of the word *psyche* and still more unaware of the pejorative implications of the word *psychikos*, and the fact that

in these days men are only too ready to be "lovers of their own selves" (II Tim 111, 2), it is much safer to think and speak of our souls as mortal, and to think only of the "ghost" that we "give up" at death as immortal. This Spirit is that in us which *knows*, and cannot pass away. It is diversified by its accidents (naturing) in Tom, Dick and Harry, but "ye are all one in Christ". The Spirit is not even hypothetically destructible.

I am so glad to know that after your 18 month's "grind" you are now really enjoying its fruits. It is, indeed, absolutely indispensable to learn to think in Sanskrit to some extent, ie, to be able to use certain terms directly, without putting them onto English "equivalents", no one of which can communicate their full content; and as soon as one can do this (however many "aids" one still needs in continuous reading) one begins at once to see a great deal that had otherwise been overlooked.

I have been losing time lately by a cold that saps one's energy; and besides that it seems impossible to cope with half the things I ought to be doing.

Kindest regards,

Bernard Kelly, Windsor, England, identified p. 20.

TO PROFESSOR JOSEPH L. MCNAMARA

May 7, 1943

Dear Dr McNamara:

Many thanks for your letter and appreciation. As to the main question, is it not one of the relation of the One to the Many? As to this, "He is one as he is in himself, but many as he is his children." Put down a dot on paper; assume it to be the centre of a circle. Evidently the radii of such a circle cannot be without the centre, but it can be without them, both before they are drawn and after they are rubbed out; evidently, then, the radii are less "essential" than the centre in which all participate.

Individuality, the psycho-physical entity, is a process rather than an essence. It includes "consciousness", ie, perception, etc. All this is a means, not an end in itself (is it not so, indeed,

in our own experience, whenever a man "devotes" himself entirely to any end beyond this self's advantage?) In this sense, "individuality" would appear to persist throughout the states of being "under the sun", ie, within the cosmos; it always implies some degree of limitation, of course. What it means to be free of all such limitation is "ineffable"; but a becoming *more* cannot be equated with an *annihilation* of the original *less*. It is the same awareness of being that says "I am", and that having outgrown that stage can say "I am" ("yet not 'I', but . . .").

The individuality becomes an evil only when we make it an end in itself, rather than a tool or means to the Inner Man who "wears" it. When it serves him, like a well trained horse, or as in the puppet symbolism, then indeed one can think of it as "sanctified"; and each of the two selves "lends itself" to the other.

As to "rebirth". If we are thinking of births on this earth and in general, we can only say that rebirth is of the immanent Self, the ultimate reality of every man's Inner man. But you have the individual in mind. This individual dies and is reborn every moment, and by analogy should be reborn after the special case that we call death or decease. If so, still as an individual, until the regular process of rising "on stepping stones of our dead selves" leaves us with awareness of being the Self itself of all beings—the last "rebirth" ("regeneration").

This is not, of course, a complete answer. "Nobody" is a "body" of which nothing can be affirmed; free from all limiting affirmations (*de-fini-tions*). I think the surviving "identity" to which you "cling" is simply that of the valid and indefeasible awareness of essence—"That art thou", where *art* implies essence.

I felt a little prejudice against *The Return of the Hero*, at first, as being a literary treatment of traditional material, the work of a "literateur". But I think it is beautifully done, and like it; it seems to me a legitimate "development" of the material, without distortion; and there is much excellent doctrine voiced by Oisín, whose account of Tirnanóg is as good a "description" of heaven as one could have got (where all description must be symbolic). Thanks for sending it.

In the May CAT . . . sent you, do read Margaret Mead. . . .

Yours sincerely,



Joseph L. McNamara, Roslindale, Massachusetts, USA.

*The Return of the Hero*, a novel by Darrell Figgis, New York, 1930.

C A T = *Catholic Art Journal*.

ANONYMOUS

Date uncertain

Sir:

In the July issue of *JP*, p 371, Karl Schmidt referring to the expression "master of myself" implies that this is an inexplicit and indeterminate conception. It is, on the contrary, explicit in the traditional philosophy that there are two in us, and what they are. I need only cite Plato, *Republic* 604D; *IiCor* IV, 16, *is qui foris est*; St Thomas Aquinas, *Sum Theol* II-II.26.4, *in homine duo sunt, scilicet natura spiritualis et natura corporalis*; and call to mind the Indian (Brahmanical and Buddhist) doctrine of the two selves, mortal and immortal, that dwell together in us. In all these literatures the natures and character of the two selves are treated at great length, and the importance of the resolution of their inner conflict emphasized; no man being at peace with himself until an agreement has been reached as to which shall rule. In this philosophy we are unfree to the extent that our willing is determined by the desires of the outer man, and free to the extent that the outer man has learnt to act, not for himself, but as the agent of the inner man, our real Self.

It is hardly true, then to propound that "The saying does not comit itself" to the statement that there are two in us, or explain what these two are. Further, innumerable phrases still current in English preserve the doctrine of the two selves; for example, such as "self-control", "self-composure", "conscience", "self-possession". It is in connection with "self-government" that Plato points out that there must be two in us; since the same thing cannot function both actively and passively at the same time and in the same connection.

Yours very truly,

The two passages that follow are taken from AKC's manuscript notes or from other letters, and are included here for the bearing they have on "the two in us."

We are never told that the mutable soul is immortal in the same way that God is immortal, but only "in a certain way" (*secundum quemdam modum*, St Augustine, *Ep* 166, 21-31). *Quomodo?* "in one way only, viz, by continuing to become; since thus it can always leave behind it a new and other nature to replace the old" Plato, *Symposium*, 207D). It is incorrect to speak of the soul indiscriminately as "immortal", just as it is incorrect to call anyone a genius; man has an immortal soul, as he has a Genius, but the soul can only be immortalised by returning to its source, that is to say by dying; and man becomes a Genius only when he is no longer "himself".

With respect to the word "soul" (*psyche*, *anima*, Heb *nefes*) translated sometimes by "life" (*Luke* XIV, 26, "and hate not his own *life* also"; *John* XII, 25: "Hateth his own *life* in the world"). Do not forget that this world usually denotes "the animal sentient principle only" (Strong, *Concordance*, Gk dictionary, p 79) and is sharply to be distinguished from the "Spirit" (*pneuma*), *spiritus*, Heb *ruah*, as in Heb XIV, 12: "the dividing asunder of soul and spirit". In place of the word "spirit" can be used such expressions as "Soul of the soul" (so Philo); the word "soul" is ambiguous, and before the usage became precise we often find "soul" employed (as in Plato) where "spirit" must be understood. In any case, one must always consider the context; in general the Gospels are not at all enthusiastic about the kind of soul that the *psychologist* is concerned about, and Jung's "man in search of a soul" is looking for something that the religions want to have done with once and for all.

TO THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ORIENTAL SOCIETY

1939

Sir:

. . . no valid distinction can be drawn between *jivan-mukti* and *videha mukti*. . . . That "deliverance can be obtained in the earthly life as in every other state" does not mean that it is with "earthly mind-ways" that perfection can be obtained; it means that these can be discarded *now*. "That *art* thou" was never said

of "this man" as he is in himself. And if the bodily functions of the *vimutto* persist, this is a "reality" rather for others than for him, who is no longer "alive" in the common sense, but much rather Rumi's "dead man walking."

The latter excerpt was part of a letter of AKC in response to a communication from Mrs C. A. F. Rhys David; see *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol LXIX, pp. 110-11, for the full exchange.

TO FATHER MARTIN C. D'ARCY, SJ

April 20, 1947

Dear Father D'Arcy:

Writing recently to a Roman Catholic friend in England, I expressed myself as very much disappointed in your *Mind and Heart of Love* not only because it treats the subject only from the standpoint of the European tradition, ignoring the enormous Sufi and Indian literature on the subject (let me mention only Dara Shikuh's equation of 'ishq with *maya*, and Rumi's "What is love? Thou shalt know when thou becomest me"! ) but more especially with reference to Chapter VII, "*Anima* and *Animus*", in which the traditional values of these terms are completely ignored, which seemed to me very strange in a Jesuit author. You begin with a ridiculous parable from Claudel, who is nothing but a pseudomystic, and has no idea of the correct use of theological terms. For *anima* and *animus*, William of Thierry's *Golden Epistle*, pp 50 and 51, is a good source; he says, eg, "For while it is yet *anima*, it lightly becometh effeminate, even to being fleshy, but *animus vel spiritus* hath no thoughts of anything save of the manly and the spiritual", and also that this *mens vel spiritus* is precisely the *imago Dei* in us. For the terms *anima* and *animus* earlier, see Cicero, *De nat deorum* III.14, 36; *Acad* II.7.22; *Tusc* I.22.52, *Cum igitur nosce te dicit, hoc dicit, nosce animum tuum*, and V.13.38: *Cum decerptus ex mente divina*. Also Accidius, *Trag* 296, *Sapimus animo, fruimus anima, sine animo, anima est debilis*. Jung, of course, uses the terms in a special way of his own, not incorrect in itself, but not in accordance with the traditional meanings.

Obviously, the *animus vel spiritus* is the "Soul of the soul" (a



phrase that for Philo and the Sufus often paraphrases "spirit") [and] is the proper object of Self-love, as in St Thomas Aquinas, *Sum Theol* II-II.26.4: "a man out of charity, ought to love himself more than he loves any other person . . . more than his neighbour."

This tradition of true Self-love (the antithesis of Self-love = selfishness) runs back to Aristotle, Plato, and Euripides (*Helen* 999); in the East, cf *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.5, for which there is an exact parallel in Plato, *Lysis* 219D – 220B. That you ignore the traditional meanings of the terms *animus* and *anima* seems to me to take all the sense out of your deprecation of "wissenschaftliche distinctions" on p 16, and seems to me to show that such distinctions cannot be ignored without resultant confusion, such as one sees in Claudel, in whose parable *anima's* SECRET LOVE CAN ONLY BE THE WORLD!

I cannot but wonder, too, where you get your information about the swastika (p 50) "as an emblem of resignation"; such rash statements ought never to be made without full discussion and citation of authorities, if any. The swastika is a solar symbol. Also on p 189, you confuse *suttee* (a formal sacrifice) with mere suicide, which last is condemned by all traditions; cf Evola, *Rivolta contra il mondo moderno*, chapter on "Uomo e donna".

Yours very sincerely,

Father Martin D'Arcy, S J, sometime master of Campion Hall, Oxford and later head of the Jesuits in England. In his day, he was one of the more popular ecclesiastical authors, and wrote *The Mind and Heart of Love*, London, 1947. Paul L. Claudel, French poet and diplomat.

*Rivolta contro il mondo moderno*, Jacques Evola, 1934. This chapter was translated by Zlata Llamas (Doña Luisa) Coomarawamy, AKC's wife, and published as 'Man and Woman' in *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, vol V, pt iv, Feb-April 1940, with a brief introduction by AKC.

William of St Thierry, *The Golden Epistle of Abbot William of St Thierry*, translated by Walter Shewring, and published in 1930.

TO FATHER MARTIN C. D'ARCY, SJ

May 2, 1947

Dear Father D'Arcy:

Many thanks for your kind letter in reply to mine. I read it very carefully. As regards the main point, I cannot but retain my strong objection to the use of established terms in new senses; at the least, unless the writer makes it perfectly clear that he knows what he is doing, and states in so many words that he is using the terms in a new sense. Thus when Jung calls *anima* the "soul-image" as envisioned by men and *animus* the "soul-image" as envisaged by women, he has a right to express his concept, but not the right to use these terms in a way that distorts their well-known meanings, according to which—man consisting of body, soul and spirit—*anima* is "soul" and *animus* "spirit".

When you say you were aware of this, but "could not accept" the traditional usage, would it not have been better to make this clear, instead of leaving the reader to wonder whether or not you were aware—as Claudel, whom you seem to quote with approval, certainly cannot have been. It seems to me that if you are writing as a priest, you have no right to say you "cannot accept" the terms of traditional theology; that you might do if writing as an independent psychologist, expressing individual opinion. I am not a priest, still I will not take such liberties; where there is a consensus of doctrine on the part of philosophers and theologians throughout many centuries, and in the diverse traditions, I regard it as primary business to understand, and in turn to write as an exegete, concerned with the transmission of true doctrine. In any case, it is only when one adheres to the precise meanings of theological terms both in East and West that one can make any valid or fruitful comparisons.

I quoted Cicero, not as a primary source, but as illustrating usage. In your reply, you do not take notice of my further citation of William of Thierry, whose usage is the same and whose expressions are *animus vel spiritus*, and *mens vel spiritus*. When St Thomas Aquinas says that it is a man's primary duty, in charity, to love himself, ie, his Inner Man (or as Philo and Plato would have said, the "Man in this man"), this is the same

as to say that the *animus* in everyman is the *anima*'s true love: therefore it was that I said that, if in Claudel's (to me silly) parable, *anima* is false to *animus*, she must be secretly loving the world, ie, herself, and her "life in this world" (John XII, 25).

Philo's *psyche psyches*, like the Islamic *jan-i-jan*, and the Sanskrit *atmano'tma* ("self of the self", used in apposition to *netr* = *hegemonikon*) is simply another equivalent of "Spirit", and has specific use when it is desired to avoid the ambiguity of the word "soul" which (as you know) is used in various senses, some pejorative. It seems to me that all these and other technical terms as *scintilla animae* (*funkelein*, *opiother*, *apospasma*) etc, have always been used clearly and intelligibly. At any rate, I am accustomed to think in these terms, and in those of their Indian and Islamic equivalents. Your own mentality is singularly acute, and when I spoke of "disappointment" it was because I had expected from you a precise and understanding use of the technical terms in which the great philosophers and theologians have always thought. But when you say the "so-called tradition is partly bogus", these sound like the words of a Protestant denouncing "Papish mumery". You ask for the benefit of the doubt, so in this case, I shall assume you did not quite mean what the words seem to say.

As regards East and West generally: it is useless to make comparisons or pass any judgements unless one knows both traditions in their sources. Existing translations are of very varying quality, and on the whole are for the most part vitiated by the fact of having been made by rationalists, excellent linguists, but themselves without religious experience and at the same time quite ignorant of the proper Greek, Latin or English equivalents of the metaphysical terms that occur in the contexts from which they translate.

To control such versions one must have at least some knowledge of the languages involved, oneself. Nevertheless, it has been a far too common practise of Christian writers to cite, eg, Sanskrit terms such as *nirvana* or *maya* in distorted senses, without any knowledge of the etymology of the terms or the contexts in which they are used. *Nirvana*, for example, one finds referred to as an "emptiness" or "annihilation" (incidentally, in this connection, Buddhaghosa reminds us that whenever such a word as "empty" occurs in a given context, we must ask ourselves "empty of what?"—as if, too, there were no



Christian literature in which the Godhead is spoken of as a "desert", or *nihil!*). *Nirvana*, then, is spoken of as "annihilation", regardless of the fact that it was a state realized by the Buddha when a comparatively young man, and that he lived a long, full and active life for very many years thereafter. If he refused to define the nature of the being or non-being after death of one who like himself had realized *Nirvana* in this life (the word means literally "despiration" and implies what Angelus Silesius meant by his "*Stirb ehe du stirbst*", and Muhammed by his "Die before you die") it is because, as a Christian might have expressed it, such are "dead and buried in the Godhead", or "their life is hid in God"; of Whom, in accordance with the *via negativa*, nothing true can be said except negatively. *Nirva* (the verb) corresponds to . . . the two English senses of the expression "to be finished", all perfection involving a kind of death, inasmuch as the attainment of *being* implies the cessation of process of *becoming*, and in the same way that for one who is "all in fact" there is nothing more that "need be done". Further, *Nirvana* has applications even in "secular" contexts: thus a woman's marriage to an ideal husband is referred to as a "*nirvana*"; in this case, the "death" is that of the maiden who *is no more*, ie, has "died" as such, when she enters into the new state of being, that of woman and wife. So too in the successive stages of the training of a royal stallion (a common analogy of the training of a disciple), each is referred to as a *nirvana*, until finally the colt is no more and the stallion remains. I have given this example at length because it very well illustrates the absolute necessity of knowing the original sources if one is to cite the technical terms of another religion than one's own. I follow this rule myself, and hardly ever quote translations (even of the New Testament) from Greek without considering the original text and the usage of the terms in question in other contexts.

As regards the *svastika*, I think it a pity that you quoted King on the subject at all; it is a good thing that you did not use the *svastika* as a symbol of "passive love". Incidentally, his queer spellings of Indian words (*Sacti* for *Sakti*, *Vichnaivas* for *Vaishnavas*) are an indication of the vagueness of his scholarship.

I shall send on your letter, or a copy, to my R. C. friend whom I spoke of. He has learnt Sanskrit recently for the

purpose of making more accurate correlation with Christian doctrines, and tells me how much more he now finds in the *Bhagavad Gita* than he has been able to get from any translation. On the whole, I am inclined to think that in the interests of truth (and that concerns us all, since "Truth" has been a name of God alike in Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) one should refrain from making any, especially any pejorative statements about "other religions" unless one knows their literature almost as well as one knows those of one's own.

Very sincerely,

Father Martin Cyril D'Arcy, S. J., as above.

TO FATHER MARTIN C. D'ARCY, SJ

May 27, 1947

Dear Father D'Arcy:

It is no doubt true that we take different views of the full meaning of the word "tradition", but this would not affect the criticism I had to make of your use of the terms *Anima* and *Animus*; my point there had to do only with the Western, ie, classical and Christian tradition, and in fact, with what might be called the lexicographical tradition. My objection was also to your use of Claudel, and citations from King, both of whom I can only regard as "misty" mentalities.

I must confess that I see no difficulty whatever in understanding the two contrasting senses in which the expression "self-love" is used, in classical, Christian and Eastern contexts equally.

What I do not understand is how you can form a judgement of the validity of my "equivalents", unless you are, as I am, familiar with *both* original sources and contexts. I am quite aware of the necessity for distinguishing between real and apparent "equivalents"; nevertheless, the latter are far too many to be ignored. Moreover, no one denied that there are some truths enunciated in other than the Christian religion—and as St Ambrose says, "Whatever is true, by whomsoever it has been said, is from the Holy Ghost", and St Thomas Aquinas (*II Sent disp*

28, q i, a 4 and 4) grants the possibility of a divine inspiration even of "barbarians".

I know there is nothing to be gained by treating these problems as a matter of argument between ourselves. What seems to me clear, however, is that an Oriental scholar seeking further information about the Christian doctrine of love could not safely rely on what you have said.

I duly sent a copy of your first letter to my R. C. friend in England and will only quote from his reply:

Consulting experts on Eastern thought will not do. One should be ashamed to speak *about* a tradition with scriptures as ancient as one's own without a thorough familiarity with originals. Otherwise one's only valid line—and theologically it can be very useful—is to show why such and such a conception (whether or not anyone really uses it in the way one thinks) is wrong.

This was, approximately, the point of the latter part of my preceeding letter.

Martin Cyril D'Arcy, SJ, as above.  
Bernard Kelly, identified p. 20.

TO FATHER GERALD VANN, OP

July 12, 1947

Dear Brother Vann:

Many thanks for your kind letter and the book. There is little or nothing in the latter I cannot agree with, or could not support from other sources, beginning with the praise of what St Thomas Aquinas calls the best form of the active life, teaching, and all that Plato means by the illuminated philosopher's duty to return to the cave—in action—but otherwise minded than before. Apropos of the "Eternal Now" (p 193), I think my *Time and Eternity* (an exposition of the doctrine from Greek, Indian, Islamic and Christian sources) will interest you. I heartedly agree with your "Remember the Mass . . . blessed" (on p 140). The Mass is like the Vedic sacrifice, a symbolic



personal immolation; and though it was undertaken only by the three upper castes, it was not for their own good alone. for:

As hungry children sit around  
About their mother here in life,  
E'en so all beings sit around  
The Agnohotra sacrifice.

Chandogya upanishad V.24.4

For, indeed, the creatures who may not take part in Sacrifice are forlorn; and therefore he makes those creatures here on earth that are not forlorn, take part in it: behind the men are the beasts, and behind the Gods are the birds, the plants and the trees; and thus all that here exists is made to participate in the sacrifice.

Satapatha Brahmana 1.5. 2.4

I am glad you have nothing to say in this book about other religions", of which so few Christian apologists have any first-hand knowledge. In exegesis, I think one should cite other traditions only when one knows them first-hand, and only when they throw light on the point to be made. My Roman Catholic friend in England who has learnt Sanskrit lately expressly in order to see for himself what is really said in the Sanskrit scriptures writes to me (and here I agree with him heartily):

Consulting experts on Eastern thought will not do. One should be ashamed to speak *about* a tradition with scriptures as ancient as one's own without a thorough familiarity with originals. Otherwise one's only valid line—and theologically it can be very useful—is to show why such and such a conception (whether or not anyone really uses it in the way one thinks) is wrong.

It must always be borne in mind that the greater part of the "experts" have been rationalists who, however learned, do not know the language in which to express the metaphysical conceptions to which, indeed, they are antagonistic by temperament and training.

There are some other Christian apologists who, like Father D'Arcy, SJ (*Mind and Heart of Love*, ch vii) even make a hash of their own terminology. I am referring to Father D'Arcy's abuse of the terms *anima* and *animus*, and his citation as authority such

pseudo-mystics as Claudel. Jung, too, misuses these terms, though in a better way, since he has something to say with his new meanings. Wilhelm in *The Secret of the Golden Flower* uses them correctly. I feel that all exegesis and apology demands the most scrupulous scholarship of which one is capable; since the ultimate subject is One to whom the Christian and so many other religions have given the name of "Truth".

Very sincerely,

Father Gerald Vann, OP, Blackfriars' School, Laxton. England.

*The Divine Pity*, London, 1947.

*The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Richard Wilhelm and Carl G. Jung, London, 1932.

TO BERNARD KELLY

April 9, 1947

Dear Bernard Kelly:

I just obtained a copy of D'Arcy's *Mind and Heart of Love*, and must say that I find it disappointing, not to say even a little "nasty", as well as ignorant (not only of eastern matters) in a way surprising indeed for a Jesuit. I say this more especially with reference to Chapter vii, *Animus and Anima*; he begins with a ridiculous parable from Claudel, who is nothing but a pseudomystic and quite ignorant of the traditional values of the terms *animus* and *anima*, for which William of St Thierry's *Golden Epistle*, 50, 51, is the best source. William says "For while it is yet *anima*, it lightly becometh effeminate, even to being fleshy; but *animus vel spiritus* hath no thoughts of anything save of the manly and the spiritual"; and this *mens vel spiritus* is precisely the *imago Dei* in us. Obviously then, the *animus* is the "Soul of the soul", the proper object of true Self love as in St Thomas Aquinas, *Sum Theol* II-II.26.4: "a man, out of charity, ought to love himself more than he loves any other person . . . more than his neighbour", and the tradition of Self love running back to Aristotle, Plato and Euripides in the West; and as in *BU* IV.5, for which there is a very close parallel in *Lysis* 219D-220B. I do not know whether the actual use of the terms *anima* and *animus* can be traced further back

than Cicero, *De nat deorum* III.14.36 (cf *Acad* II.7.22, *animus* as the seat of "perceptions", ie, scientific concepts). Jung, of course uses the terms in a special way, not incorrect in itself, but at the same time *not* in accordance with the traditional meanings. D'Arcy seems quite unaware of all this, and this makes nonsense of his deprecation of "*wissenschaftliche* distinctions", p 16). In other words, he is not transmitting dogma, but merely thinking sloppily.

Turning to our own affairs, as regards the Trinity: Eckhart calls this an "arrangement" of God, and indeed I can only think of it as one of many possible formulations of "relations" in God. Moreover, the doctrine is strictly speaking *smṛiti* rather than *śruti*. Also, I cannot quite see how the Unity of the Three does not, in a sense, make a fourth", ie, a One as logically transcending the Trinity with reference to which St Thomas himself says "We cannot say 'the only God', because deity is common to several". I think the closest comparisons must be based on MU IV.4,5 (Agni, Vayu, Aditya as forms of Brahma or Purusha).

Kindest regards,

Bernard Kelly, identified p. 20.

BU = *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*

MU = *Maitri Upanishad*

*Śruti* = the highest degree of revelation in Hinduism, knowledge by identification. The Vedas, including the Upanishads, are considered *śruti*. *Smṛiti* = a lower degree of revelation, from reflection on the *śruti*; among such texts are the Epics and usually the Bhagavad Gita. Analogous rankings in Christianity would be the Gospels (*śruti*) and the Pauline Epistles (*smṛiti*).

TO BERNARD KELLY

August 6, 1947

Dear Bernard Kelly:

Yours of July 16: I have had in mind to write on the "Use and Abuse of the terms *anima* and *animus*", but 1) I must not undertake any new tasks, but conserve energy to finish one's begun (doctor's orders!), and 2) I think you could do it better. I think it would be useful to do this, rather than write a critique



of D'Arcy in a more general way. But you would have to read and refer to D'Arcy's Ch vii at least. I now add such references as I have come across, under the two headings of use and abuse:

USE: W of Thierry, *Golden Epistle* 50, 51, *animus vel spiritus* and *mens vel animus*; Augustine, *De ordine* 1.1.3, *qui tamen ut se noscat, magna opus habet consuetudine recendi a sensibus (corporalibus)*, to be added from the *Retractio*, *et animum in seipsum colligendi atque in seipso retinendi*; probably derived from Cicero, *Tusc* 1.22.52, *neque nos corpora sumus. Cum igitur nosce te dicit, hoc dicit, nosce animum tuum*: cf 5.13.38, *humanus animus decerptus ex mente divina*; Varro, *Men* 32, *in reliquo corpore ab hoc fente diffusa est anima, hinc animus ad intelligentiam tributus* (cf *pene* passages cited in *Rgveda* 10.90.1 . . .); *Enneads* 3.8.10; Ruysbroek, *Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*, c 35; Epictetus, 3.8.18; Shamsi-Tabriz, Ode XII in Nicholson, 1938; Philo, *Prov* 1.336 . . .; *Det* 83 . . .; *Fug* 1.95f and 182; *Enneads* 6.8.9. Accidius, *Trag* 296, *sapimus animo, fruimur anima, sine animo, anima est debilis*; Epicurus, *De rer nat*, C 3: "Now I say that Mind (*animus*) and Soul (*anima*) are held in union one with the other, and form of themselves a single nature, but that the head, as it were, and Lord in the whole body is the counsel (*consilium*) that we call Mind (*animus*) or Understanding (*mens*). . . . The rest of the Soul (*anima*), spread abroad throughout the body, obeys and is moved at the will and inclination of the Understanding (*mens*)"; and notably Wilhelm, *Secret of the Golden Flower*, p 73, "In the personal bodily existence of the individualities, a *p'o* soul (or *anima*) and a *hun* soul (or *animus*). All during the life of the individual these two are in conflict, each striving for mastery (psychomachy!). At death they separate and go different ways (like *nefes* and *ruah* in the Old Testament = *psyche* and *pneuma* in the New Testament, eg, Heb IV, 12). The *anima* sinks to earth as *kuei* ("dust to dust"), a ghost-being (psychic residue). The *animus* rises and becomes *shên*, a revealing spirit of God (*daimon*, *yaksa*). *Shên* may in time return to Tao. . . ." Also Augustine, *De ordine* 2.34: *animus* will be offended by the eyes, if the latter are attracted by falsity attractively presented. (A few of the above references are merely taken from the Latin dictionary, but most I have seen).

ABUSE: D'Arcy, *loc cit*; Jung, *Psychological Types*, 1923, p 595:

"If, therefore, we speak of the *anima* of a man, we must logically speak of the *animus* of a woman, if we are to give the soul of a woman its right name", and 596-7: "With men the soul, ie, the *anima*, is usually figured by the unconscious in the person of a woman; with women it is a man"; and "For a man, a woman is best fitted to be the bearer of his soul-image, by virtue of the womanly quality of his soul; similarly a man, in the case of a woman" (for him, also, *persona* = "outer attitude" and "soul" = "inner attitude"!); Jung has a real idea to express, eg, as of Beatrice as Dante's "soul-image"—but his is a reckless abuse of terms; he does not realise that *anima* and *animus* are "two in us", *is qui foris est* and *is qui intus est*, whether "we" are "men" or "women"! *Animus* in Latin represents the *daimon* [?] or *pneuma* [?], ie, *conscientia* that Socrates and Aristotle called infallible; the *nous* [?] within you. *Homo vivitur ingenio, coetera mortis sunt!* So I charge you to write on *anima* and *animus*. (I forgot to add, you will find the terms misused also by E. I. Watkin—who ought to know better—in *The Wind and the Rain*, 3, 1947, pp 179-84, following D'Arcy and Jung. If all these errors are not pointed out soon, we shall never be able to catch up with them). I should add also that while Jung almost always "rejects metaphysics" and reduces it to "psychology", in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, 1928, ch 4, p 268, Jung does rightly use the terms Ego and Self, and the latter being "unknowable" (in the sense that "the eye cannot see itself") and in that passage is a metaphysician in spite of himself.

About *purusa* and *prakrti* = *mayin* and *maya*, these are for me St Thomas Aquinas' *principium conjunctum* from which the Son proceeds—Nature being "that Nature by which the Father begets" (Damascene, *De fide orth* 1.18, as in *Sum Theol* I-I.45.5): "I made myself a mother of whom to be born. . . . That nature, to wit, which created all others" (Augustine, *Contra V Haer* V = *De Trin* XIV, 9) = *Natura naturans*, *Creatrix Iniversalis*, *Deus* (sic, in Index to Turin 1932 ed of *Sum Theol*). Cf *Pancavimsa Br* VII.6.1 to 9 (in 6, "eldest son" = Agni, see JUB 2.25. *Brhati* = Vac = mother of *Brhat*; you will find this *PBr* passage very interesting from the standpoint of "filial procession").

*Ex necessitate naturae* = *necessitas infallibilitatis*, I presume; just as it is nature (necessity) of light to illuminate; it seems to be erroneous to think of such a "necessity" as any limitation of



"freedom" (what is "freedom" but to be free to act in accordance with one's own nature?).

Regarding proportion of *natura naturans* to *natura naturata*: as Guénon would word it, God in act implies the realisation of infinite possibility (this would not include the creation of non-entities like the "horns of a hare" or "son of a barren woman", of course, which would involve a violation of *natura naturans*); but infinite possibility has two aspects, including both the possibilities of manifestation, and things that are not possibilities of manifestation (the latter = *arcana*, known to Cherubim, but to us only by analogy at best). It would seem to me that the proportion between the possibilities of manifestation and the actuality of all things in time and space would be exact; if that were all, it would involve a kind of pantheism, but that is *not* all.

I don't seem to know Gabriel Thiery's Eckhart. But I have 12 fascicules of the magnificent Stuttgart edition, still in progress, of all the Latin and German works of Eckhart; this is really a splendid piece of work!

I do think the Thomist *duo sunt in homine* is to be taken seriously, as referring to *is qui foris est* and *is qui intus est*; indeed, without some such concept of a duality the notion of a psychomachy, internal conflict, would be meaningless. The "two" would seem to be the trace of the Divine Biunity of Essence and Nature—one in Him but distinct in us. Tho', as Hermes says, "Not that the One is two, but that the two are One": which it is for us to restore and realise by resolution of the conflict in consent of wills.

This is all I can manage for today.

Affectionately,

Bernard Kelly, identified p. 20.

The romanized Greek words followed by bracketed question marks, p. 148. above, were added provisionally by the editors as the originals were either illegible or missing in the copy available to the editors. This letter, incidentally, can serve as a not untypical example of the complexity that one occasionally finds in AKC's writing, particularly in some of his later papers.



TO BERNARD KELLY

August 19, 1947

Dear Bernard Kelly:

I am so happy to hear that you will take up the *anima-animus* job.

Caland's *Pancavimsa Brahmana* is *Bibliotheca Indica* no 255. Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1931; Wilhelm, *Secret of the Golden Flower* is Kegan Paul, London, 1932. Incidentally, the Royal Asiatic Society (74 Grosvenor St, London WC1) might be more convenient than the British Museum for looking up many things, because of its smaller size.

Re *Golden Flower*, it is Wilhelm's part to which I referred; Jung's is properly dealt with in a Preau, *La Fleur d'or et le Taoisme sans Tao*, Paris, circa 1932 (based on the German edition of Wilhelm and Jung, 1929), esp p 49:

... que cet auteur (Jung) parle à plusieurs reprises du Soi (das Selbst) qu'il oppose au moi (*das ich*), ne peut faire impression sur personne. Aussi longtemps qu'il n'a pas dit que ce "Soi" est un terminaison de l'Esprit primordial, qu'il est d'ordre universel et identique au "Grand Un", il n'a rien dit; et il reste exposé à l'objection que ce qu'il y a de véritablement intéressant dans la pensée orientale du Taoisme, de celle sans laquelle l'idée du Retour devient inintelligible.

In *The Secret* . . . itself, Jung on p 117 repeats his misuse of the term *animus*, remarking (without giving any source) *mulier non habet animam sed animum*. I wonder if he even knows that the word *animus* has a history! Incidentally, in *The Secret* . . . , throughout for *mandala* read *mandāla*.

I am sending you "Recollection. . . ."

I have of the Stuttgart Eckhart, the *Lateinische Werke* I, 1-160 (chiefly *Expositio Libri Genesis*; III, 1-240 (*Expositio S. Ev. sec Joannem*); IV, 1-240 (*Sermones*); and V, 1-128 (*Miscellaneous tracts*). A few of these I have obtained since the war.

In my "Loathly Bride", p 402, note 3 has bearing on *animus* as "lawful husband" of *anima*.

I believe this is all I can add at present.

Affectionately,

Bernard Kelly, Windsor, England.

TO BERNARD KELLY

August 29, 1947

Dear Bernard Kelly:

I suppose the "two in us" are respectively the substantial and the actual *forma* of the soul, *forma* corresponding to *eidos* in *Phaedo* 79, A & B, *Timaeus* 90 A. I feel quite proud to have you ask me for a Thomistic reference! viz, *Sum Theol* II-II.26.4: *Repondeo dicendum quod in hominis duo sunt, scilicet natura spiritualis et natura corporalis*; the meaning is quite clear from the rest of the context, which deals with man's first duty to love, after God, *seipsum secundum spiritualem naturam*—*Homo seipsum magis ex charitate diligere tenetur, quam proximum* being the same as our modern "Charity begins at home" (though *we* are apt to interpret this aphorism cynically!). Some of the older references for self-love = love of Self as distinguished from self, are: *Hermes Lib* 4.6.B (cf Scott, *Hermetica* 2.145), Aristotle, *Nich Ethics* 9.8 (cf *Mag Mor* II.xi,xiii,xiv). On true Self-love, *BU* 4.5 (cf also 2.4) like Plato, *Lysis* 219D–220B!; "Platonic love" as for Ficino (see Kristeller, pp 279–287), *BU* 1.4.8; cf Augustine cited in Dent edition of *Paradiso*, p 384). Plato, *Republic* 621C, *Phaedo* 115B (care for our Self = care for others), *Laws* 731E and (a very impressive context) Euripides, *Helen* 999. Cf Context of *Homer and Hesiod* 320B. That there "two in us" = Plato *Rep* 604B . . . (f *Phaedo* 79 A,B; *Timaeus* 89D). Why "must be?", because, to quote at greater length, "where there are two opposite impulses in a man at the same time about the same thing, we say there must be two in us"; and similarly 436B, and many passages on internal conflict, eg, *Rep* 431 A,B, 439, 440, and notably Aristotle *Met* V.3.8–9 (1005B) "the most certain of all principles, that it is impossible for the same property at once belong and not to belong to the same thing in the same relation"—all resumed in St Aquinas *Sum Theol* I.93.5: *nil agit in seipsum*.

"Charity begins at home"; note that what is said in the New Testament about the indwelling Spirit (eg, I Cor 3, 16: *to pneuma tou theou oikei en humin* is said of the immanent Daimon

in Platonic and other Greek sources (eg, *Timaeus* 90C. . . . Many, many other references for *to pneuma* = Socratic *daimon* = conscience.

In other words the whole problem is involved in the psychomachy, and is only resolved when a man has made his peace with him-Self (cf result in *Homer-Hesiod* 320B and AA2.3.7). I have many pages of references for “two in us”, and for “psychomachy”!

Philo’s “Soul of the soul” in *Heres* 55 is the *hegemonikon* part, the divine *pneuma* as distinguished from the “blood-soul”; and *Opif* 66 = *nous*. *Heres* 55: “The word ‘soul’ is used in two senses, with reference either to the soul as a whole or to its dominant part, which latter is, properly speaking, the ‘Soul of the soul’ ” (= *MU* 6.7, *atmano’tma netamrtakhya*—*netr* being precisely *hegemonikos*. In general, for the “two in us”: *John* 3,36, *II Cor* 4, 16, *SumTheol* 1.75.4; *CU* 8.12; *MU* 3.2; *JB* 1.17 (*dvyatma*), *Hermes* 1.15, and *Ascl* 1; *Mark* 8, 34; *Prasna Up* 6.3, etc, etc.

Again, “Soul of the soul” as *hegemonikon* = *Dhammapada* 380, *atta hi attano natho atta hi gati* . . . , cf ib 160 (in *PTS Minor Anthologies* . . . I, p 124 and 56). Pali *atta* = Sanskrit *atman*.

Guillaume de Thierry, *De contemplando Dei* 7.15: *Tu te ipsum amas in nobis, et nos in te, cum te per se amamus, et in tertium tibi unimur, in quantum te amare meremus*.

This is about all I can manage for now.

With kindest regards,

PS: Another ref for *animus*: Emperor Julian’s last words *animus* . . . *immaculatum conservavi*. I think you have enough references for the history of the word *animus* to be able to deal adequately with its modern misuse.

Bernard Kelly, Windsor, England, identified p. 20.



TO BERNARD KELLY

September 8, 1947

Dear Bernard Kelly:

Notably in Heb 4, 12, St Paul distinguishes the "two in us". So often St Augustine distinguishes what is mortal and mutable in us from what is immutable and immortal, the latter Intellect; for St Thomas Aquinas it is similarly the "intellectual virtues" that survive. But also (with Plato, etc) one can speak of the "whole soul" or of its parts; our business is one of integration, to restore the unity *auto kath' eauton*. I agree it is the same to say *animus* is *anima* considered according to her spiritual nature, as to say that *animus* is the spiritual "part" of the soul. It is in so far as we are divided against ourselves (psychomachy, schizophrenia) that we *must* speak of parts. In origin, *anima* is more than the animating principle; rather, as such, she is an extension of the Spirit, his *ancilla*, from whom he receives reports of the sensible world—and when she is purified, his fitting bride. In the *Sum Theol* I.45.6, *quod dominando gubernet at vulticet quae sunt creata*. . . .—it is really *the Spirit* that quicken every life.

I don't think you should think of Guénon's initiatory succession as even possibly diabolical; don't forget how serious he is, and how he himself distinguishes true from "counter"—initiation. Baptism, *qua* "new birth" was certainly originally an initiation, though now rather more like a consecration only.\*

Obviously no great urgency about *Art and Thought*, Vol II, since even Vol I is still in press. Bharatan Iyer's address is: Office of the Accountant General, Rangoon, Burma. It would certainly please me to have your *anima-animus* as your contribution, but I hardly suppose a second volume could appear before the end of 1948, which seems far off.

I will write to Iyer soon, and commend your article to him; I am just completing a piece on Athena and Hephaistos as cooperators in the Greek concept of creative art, but divorced in industrial production.

Affectionately,

PS: I note: Jacques Maritain, *A New Approach to God*, says "in the inner stimulation of culture, it is through Christian

philosophy, in addition to the irrefragable ontological truth promulgated by every great religion, that the new civilization will be spurred." That is how I see "the great religions" working together, but I hardly expected it from him! (*In Our Emergent Civilization*, ed by R. N. Anshen, New York, 1947, p 288).

\* Baptism, assuming the integrity of the rite, is an initiation now if ever it was; however, it doubtless remains virtual more frequently now than in former times, due to the 'progressive' deterioration of the cycle.

Bernard Kelly, Windsor, England.

*Art and Thought*, *festschrift* issued in honor of Dr Coomaraswamy on the occasion of his seventieth birthday; edited by K. Bharatha Iyer, London, 1947. A second volume was planned but was never realized.

Jacques Maritain, French Thomist philosopher, convert to Roman Catholicism as a young man; became leading neo-Thomist and taught at Paris, Princeton and Toronto.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

March 6, 1943

Sir,

I should like to say a few words on Gens' review of a book by "Nicodemus" in your issue of December 23rd, 1943. As to "being and becoming" (essence and existence) this is indeed a vital distinction with which everyone has been concerned—in the Western world from Plato onwards, as well as in the East. What is unorthodox is to treat the two as alternatives. The Supreme Identity is of both; the single essence with two natures is of a being that becomes, and of a becoming that is of being. To argue for a becoming only is like speaking of a "significant" art of which we cannot explain the significance: to believe in a being only is a monistic form of monophytism. The argument is not *Cogito ergo sum*, but *Cogito ergo EST*—we become because *He is*.

Gens' objection to the opposition of spirit to soul is quite irregular. As St Paul says, the Word of God extends to the sundering of soul and spirit; the spirit is willing (ie. wills), but the flesh is weak. The Old Testament word for "soul" (*nefesh* = *anima*) always refers to man's lower, *animal* and *fleshy*

nature; it is this soul that Christ asks us to "hate", and requires us to "lose" if we would save the soul "of the soul", ie, spirit) alive; and of which Meister Eckhart says that "the soul must put itself to death"—as St Paul must have done, if he said truly that "I live, yet not 'I', but Christ in me", being thus what we should call in India a *jivan-mukta*, "freed here and now". This "soul", "self" or Ego to be overcome is the sensitive "soul" (*nafs*, Arabic form of Hebrew *nefesh*) that Rumi throughout the *Mathnawi* equates with the "Dragon" that none can overcome without divine aid. The distinction of spirit from soul is of our immortal form from our mortal nature, and wise indeed is he whose philosophy like Plato's is an *ars moriendi*; or, in Rumi's words, has "died before he dies", or in Buddhist terms, has become a "nobody".

TO DAVID WHITE

September 17, 1944

Dear Mr White:

Practically the whole answer to the problem of the "death of the soul" is contained in the symbolism of sowing: "Except a seed fall to the ground and die . . ." It is the life of the seed that lives. Hence St Thomas also enunciates the law, "no creature can attain a higher grade of nature without ceasing to exist", and Eckhart: "he would be what he should must cease from being what he is". To *cease from* any state of being is to *decease*. This death of the soul should take place, if possible, before our physical death. Muhammed's "die before you die" coincides with Angelus Silesius *Stirb, ehe du stirbst*. Evidently St Paul had so died ("I live, yet not 'I'"); as we should say, he was a *jivanmukta*, a freedman *here and now*. Jaco Boehme: "Thus we understand how a life perishes. . . . If it will not give itself up to death, then it cannot attain any other world (ie, any other state of being).

The intellectual preparation for self-naughting will be the easier if with Plato, Plutarch, Buddha, etc, we already realize that our empirical "self" cannot be thought of as "real" because of its mutability; and so detach our sense of being from things that are only our instruments or vehicles (physical sensibility,



mental consciousness based on observation, etc). When we injure our body and say "I cut myself", but should say "my body was cut" only; to say "my feelings were hurt (by an unkind word) is more correct than to say "I was hurt".

If the New Testament sometimes seems to speak of saving the "soul" itself, you must always bear in mind the ambiguity of the word, except where "soul of the soul", "immortal soul" or "spirit" are expressly contrasted with "soul". In any context, you must be clear which "soul" is used or meant.

All translations should be read with caution. I do not recommend Yeats or Carus—"would you know the truths of Jacob Behmen, you must stand where he stood" (William Law)—applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the understanding of any unfamiliar truths. By the way, there is a good edition of much of Law by Hob-house (London . . . 1940). The best readily available of Dionysius is the volume by Rolt (Soc for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge) which costs only 4sh. 6.

Law says: "You are under the power of no other enemy, are held in no other captivity and want no other deliverance but from the power of your earthly self." That "self" is the "soul" that Christ asks us to "hate", and that Rumi consistently calls the "dragon", and Philo the "serpent". This snake must shed its skin, from which "it" (ie, what was real in "it") emerges a "new man", in a body of light—which is the true "resurrection"—but never if it insists upon remaining "itself". All the wordings are more or less paradoxical; but it seems to me not hard to grasp their meaning.

I liked your review well, and hope they will publish it.

Yours sincerely,

David White was a PhD candidate at Friends University, Wichita, Kansas. The translations referred to are W. B. Yeats and Sri Purohit Swami, *The Ten Principal Upanishads*, and Paul Carus' translations from the Buddhist scriptures.

William Law, eighteenth century Anglican divine, non-juror, and spiritual writer; influenced by Jacob Boehme. See letter to Stephen Hobhouse, p 61. *Dionysius the Areopagite: The Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, translated by C. E. Rolt and published in 1920, 1940 and later dates by SPCK, London.

TO MRS ROGER S. FOSTER

May 13, 1946

Dear Mrs Foster:

Many thanks for your response. Jung expressly repudiates metaphysics in Wilhelm and Jung, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, pp 128–135, and this book was accordingly discussed by Preau under the title of *Le Taoisme sans Tao*. On the other hand, there can be no question but that Jung's own treatment of the Ego and the Self in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, 1928, p 268 (Ego knowable, Self unknowable) is metaphysical (literally, since he uses the words "the step beyond science") and also more like the language of traditional psychology than that of "psycho-analysis". I did at one time correspond with Dr Jung, who used to welcome my papers on the sense of traditional symbols, but I really gave him up after an article he wrote about India after a three weeks visit, and which might have been written by a Baptist missionary. However, I do of course admire much of his writing, eg, in *The Integration of the Personality*, 1939, p 272—(on the inflated consciousness); and in *The Secret*. . . , some remarks on scholarship on p 77.

I take it Eliot (whom I know only slightly) used the traditional symbolism consciously; the very title "The Waste Land" is a traditional symbol. A few Roman Catholic artists use the traditional symbols quite consciously. I forget if I mentioned to you my articles in *Speculum* ("Sir Gawain . . ." in XIX, and "Loathly Bride" in XX; these and the two *Psychiatry* articles and "Dürer's Knots" are the kind of thing I mean by the study of the forms of the common universe of discourse of which the psychologist is nowadays discovering the buried traces in the background of consciousness. I send you Marco Pallas' *Way and the Mountain* as another example (please return it); also a recent lecture of my own, rather a different theme (which please keep if you care to). I have myself done a great deal of work on the Sphinx (Greek, not Egyptian); and though I have not got round to completing it for publication, I did find, after I had done most of it, that I had reached the same conclusion that had long ago been reached, on the same grounds, by Clement of Alexandria. This subject, of course, cannot be discussed without going into the significance of the

Cherubim and their representation by Sphinxes in Assyrian art of the time of Solomon. I have had a very interesting correspondence with John Layard; to a great extent he combines the psychologist's methods with my own.

Very sincerely,

Mrs Roger S. Foster, instructor in psychology, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, USA

"Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Indra and Namuci", *Speculum*, XIX, 1944

"On the Loathly Bride", *Speculum*, XX, 1945.

"Spiritual Paternity and the Puppet Complex", *Psychiatry*, VIII, 1945.

"The Iconography of Dürer's 'Knoten' and Leonardo's Concatenation", *Art Quarterly*, VII, 1944

TO REV PAUL HANLEY FURFEY, SJ

January 7 (year uncertain)

My dear Furfey:

Many thanks for your letter and pains. I feel ashamed to have put you to so much trouble.

I liked your article very much. I am all on the "extreme" side and feel that as a *whole*, the Church has yielded too much to modernism. Of course, there are individuals to whom this would not apply. What is necessary above all is no intellectual compromise whatever. That I admire in Guénon, that he makes absolutely no concessions. I would rather see the truth reduced to the possession of one single individual on earth than have the whole world in a half light, even though that might be better than none at all. I saw Carey the other day, and we spoke of you.

Very sincerely,

Paul Hanley Furfey, SJ department of sociology, Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., USA.

René Guénon, Cairo, Egypt.

Graham Carey, Catholic author, Fairhaven, Vermont, USA.



TO MOTHER AGNES C. DUCEY

June 25, 1945

Dear Mother Ducey:

I recognize your very kind intention, though we are not likely to agree on the total issue. However, I must say that whatever limitations we ascribe to some other religion than our own are generally due to our ignorance of it. For example, in Hinduism, God is not "infinite good and infinite evil", but transcends these (and all other) distinctions. These distinctions are valid for us, but His "Goodness" (or to avoid confusion with our own, I would rather say *Worth*) is not, like our's, as if he might not have been "good". He is the author of good and evil only in the sense, that in any created world there must be such contraries, or it would not be a "world". In that He both makes alive and slays, gives and takes away, he does things that are from our human point of view both good and evil; but His *Worth* is neither increased by the one nor decreased by the other effect. "The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord." It will be, in fact, very difficult, if not impossible, to make any valid criticism of another religion if one has not studied its sacred texts and practised its Way as thoroughly as it may be assumed that one has studied those of one's own, and followed its Way. A position like your own rests only upon an *a priori* conviction that what you know *must* be the superior and only complete body of truth; whether or not it is so, you have not investigated, because the conviction suffices for you. All your *positive* acts are good; you are right to believe "furiously" in your truth; but it is otherwise when you come to *negative* convictions; your *a priori* conviction of other's errors *proves* nothing, and you are not qualified to work from any but second hand sources—which in the case of the oriental religions are very unsafe, since these religions were investigated at first by those who had in mind to refute them, and later almost wholly by rationalists, to whom they seemed a folly for the same reasons that Christianity seems a folly to the world. The last thing I would wish to deny (just as I would for Hinduism), is that yours is a complete body of truth; but I do deny (just as I would for Hinduism) that it is so in any exclusive sense. If you

are not with us, at least we are with you.

Please do not pray that I may become a Christian; pray only that I may know God better every day. That will be greater charity on your part, and at the same time will leave you free to think that that means becoming a Christian, but leaving it to God whether or not that be the case.

Very sincerely,

Mother Agnes C. Ducey was an Ursuline nun of the Convent of the Sacred Heart, St Joseph, Missouri, USA, who was praying earnestly that Dr Coomaraswamy might become a Roman Catholic.

TO MOTHER AGNES C. DUCEY

July 9, 1945

Dear Mother Ducey:

If you have not sufficient humility, nor sufficient trust in God, to pray to Him on my behalf, merely that I may know Him better, leaving it to Him to decide whether or not that necessarily means a Christian confession, correspondence is useless, and had better be terminated.

Very sincerely,

Mother Agnes C. Ducey, as above.

TO MOTHER AGNES C. DUCEY

June 27, 1947

Dear Mother Ducey:

Many thanks for yours of June 24. Incidentally, it contains the first news I have ever received of anyone "condoning caste murders" in India. As for the "destruction of human personality", this would seem to be the annihilationist heresy" against which the Buddha so often fulminated. Moreover, as you

know, the Christian as well as the Platonic and Indian doctrine is that *duo sunt in homine*; of which two, one is the outer man or "Ego" or "personality" the other the Inner Man, or very Self. The problem, from the Indian point of view, as elsewhere, is one of re-integration; for as St Paul and others are so well aware, there is a conflict between these two until the reconciliation of wills is effected, that is, until "I want" and "I ought" have come to mean the same. In India, the nature of this reconciliation is expressed as follows:

The self lends itself to that Self, they coalesce (or combine, or are wedded); with the one form the man is united with yonder world, and with the other to this world.

*Aitareya Aranyaka* II.3.7

There is no question of "destruction"; indeed, as you doubtless know, the destruction of anything real, anything that IS, is a metaphysical impossibility. True, it is a question of *self-sacrifice*, and in Islam and Hinduism, as much as in Christian writings, one speaks of self-naughting, but that implies a transformation, not a destruction. Of course, it is almost impossible to discuss of any other form of religion than one's own unless one is equally familiar with both in their sources. For the Upanishads, I would recommend to you the Rev W. R. Teape's *Secret Lore of India*.

Of course, I fully agree about "again as little children" and refer you to the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* III.4.2: "Therefore let a Brahman become disgusted with learning and desire to live like a child." With regard to "What shall it profit a man?", cf *ibid* I.4.8. On true "Self-love"—as in St Thomas Aquinas *Sum Theol* II-II.26.4; and the same Upanishad I.5.15 (distinction of the Self or very Man from his temporal powers and attributes, possessions, or "wealth"; all may be lost, if only the Very Man is saved).

There would be no difficulty in "interesting" me in Saint John of the Cross; so far, I do not actually know him well, though I have some books of Allison Peers.

Lets us say that in all problems of "comparative religion", scholarship is a necessary qualification; but no amount of scholarship will avail without *charity*. The learning is needed to enable us to find out what has really been taught; charity to



protect us from a natural human tendency to misinterpret the unfamiliar propositions unjustly.

Very sincerely,

Mother Agnes C. Ducey, as above.

TO MOTHER AGNES C. DUCEY

May 6, 1947

Dear Mother Ducey:

Many thanks for your kind letter. To answer fully would require a very long letter; and I do not really want to engage in any further controversy.

My point would be that if Christ be the only Son of God, the question still remains "What think ye of Christ?" A Hindu would be quite ready to recognize in Him a manifestation of the "Eternal Avatara". This position would be similar to that of Clement of Alexandria, *viz*, that the Spirit of Christ has appeared again and again in the world (in the succession of prophets). This is also essentially the Islamic position. The Hindu would point out also that even your own St Thomas Aquinas allows that the "heathen" may be inspired (for the reference, see marked passage in one of the printed papers I send separately).

Nothing can be known except in accordance with the mode of the knower. Christianity as a system of theology is a "mode" and in this respect not to be thought of as "universal". It is the Truth that appears in all religions that alone can be thought of as "universal", ie, as essence distinguished from human accidents. Moreover, one must not forget that all specific dogmas (even that of the Trinity) are transcended in the Negative Theology.

The "other religions" do not feel themselves under any necessity to assert the universality of their forms, but only of their essence. This is a very happy position, and enables them to recognize the *essential* truth of what are for them "other religions". Followers of other religions are not opposed to Christianity as such at all, but only to certain activities of

Christians, notably "missions". These are admittedly and deliberately destructive of their cultures, such as the Hindu; for the other cultures are not profane cultures, but inseparably bound up with the corresponding faiths. It is only on this level of reference, then, that opposition rises.

Very sincerely,

Mother Agnes C. Ducey, as above.

TO MOTHER AGNES C. DUCEY

June 20, 1947

Dear Mother Ducey:

Many thanks for yours of June 16. About the Upanishads, and [their] value for a Catholic, you could hardly judge without knowing them as thoroughly, in their original language, as you know the Christian scriptures. However, consider the well known prayer from the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* I.3.28: "From the unreal lead us to the Real (or from untruth to Truth): from darkness, lead us unto Light: from death, lead us unto Immortality."

I have D'Arcy's *Mind and Heart of Love*, and can say—in this case from the point of view of strictly Christian scholarship—that it seems to me to be a sloppy and careless piece of work. I say this with special reference to Chapter VII, which begins with a ridiculous allegory quoted from Paul Claudel, who is nothing but a "pseudo-mystic" himself. I am referring to D'Arcy's misunderstanding and arbitrary misuse of the terms *anima* and *animus*. You will find these terms correctly used in William of Thierry, *The Golden Epistle*, 50, 51: *anima vel spiritus*, and *mens vel animus*. *Anima* and *animus* are, from classical times onwards, respectively the feminine soul and the masculine Spirit in any one of us, man or woman. So *animus* is *anima*'s true love; and if Claudel's *anima* is untrue to her *animus*, it can only be for the sake of the world that she deceives him! Such a book as this is of no use to any non-Christian who wants to know what Christianity is. A devout Roman Catholic friend of mine in England holds similar views of D'Arcy, and so I dare

say do many others. I say all this without any reference to other than Christian points of view; although, of course, the Thomist *duo sunt in homine* and the doctrine of true "Self-love" are common to Christianity, Plato, Aristotle, and also to Hinduism and Buddhism.

I think the attitude of the University of Bombay is, broadly speaking, *correct*, but it is going rather too far to forbid lectures on Dante! Things have changed in India as elsewhere. You can only *teach* Christianity as what Hindus would call a *darsana*, a "point of view", as one valid Way amongst others, leading to one goal.

As for "conversion": there are rare souls who can give themselves to God more easily in one (new to them) Tradition, than in another (in which they were reared). I know, for instance, of a Tibetan who is a real Christian, and of Christians who have become true Moslems; indeed, the Moslems say of such that sometimes "they go farther (on the Way) than even we do". But such changes of mode are very exceptional needs.

I know of a Trappist monk in Belgium whose brother is an outstanding European Moslem; neither wishes to "convert" the other, and both are highly respectful of the North American Indian religion, nor do either of them wish to change it. Both are "men of prayer", and both of the highest intelligence and devotion.

With best wishes for your journey,

Mother Agnes C. Ducey, as above.

TO MR R. HOPE

April 8, 1946

Dear Mr Hope:

Our disagreement is largely about terms. I would not regard "thinking", if this means "contemplation", a "moral act"; morality for Aquinas *et al*, pertains to the active life, not the contemplative life. If "thinking" is "reasoning", then it would be an activity with "moral" implications.

That there is infinity in everything, I agree; but this does not mean that the thing itself can be described as infinite. The sands



of the sea are not infinite in number, only indefinite; their number can be estimated and such numbers are dealt with by statistics. Thus the opposites, of which the walls of Paradise are built, are indefinitely numerous; but this wall is still a part of finity through the limit of space, and infinity lies *beyond* it. The same infinity is, of course, immanent in all things as well as beyond them; but this immanence no more allows us to speak of any thing as infinite than it allows us to equate "this man So-and-so" with God; there is God in him, but he is not God, and if deified by *ablatio omnis alteritatis*, then he is no longer "this man So-and-so".

When I seem definitely to disagree with you is in that I do not believe in a moral or spiritual progress of mankind, but only for individuals. It is still possible for individual consciousness to "unfold" even in this intellectually decadent age. What you call Preparatory School Stage (historically) represents for me something nearer to the Golden Age, intellectually and spiritually. I have to use its language when I want to be *precise*.

It is only too true that we in the East are in danger of following in your footsteps.

Sincerely,

Mr R. Hope, Leeds, England.

TO PROFESSOR (WILLIAM FOXWELL?) ALBRIGHT

July 1, 1942

Dear Professor Albright:

Many thanks for your book. Naturally, the introductory parts with their general considerations are of most interest to me. It is in this connection that I would like to say that I think you take Levy-Bruhl too much for granted, and wonder if you have considered the other point of view stated in Oliver Leroy's *La Raison primitif*, Paris . . . 1927; W. Schmidt's *High Gods of North America*, Oxford, 1933, and my "Primitive Mentality" in *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*. (The last I am sending you but must ask you to return it in due course as I have left only a few "lending copies").

I think that to Levy-Bruhl perhaps, and to Frazer quite surely, Schmidt's words apply: "such pleasure as proceeds from the ironical railleries not seldom dealt out to primitive man, which betray so much bitterness deeply concealed at the bottom of the heart." I, too, know this "bitterness" but do not hide it, and I see its basis as a *mea culpa* of "modern man".

In so far as I *am*—and that is pretty far—a "primitive mentality" my self, I do *not* have this bitterness.

One other point: the modern "savage" is often not a true representative of "primitive man", but very often degenerate, in that his notions are literally super-stitions which he no longer really or fully understands—for example, when he calls stone arrowheads "thunderbolts".

.....

Very sincerely,

Professor Albright is not identified beyond his family name, but it is assumed that he was William Foxwell Albright, the prominent Orientalist who specialized in Semitic languages and who wrote *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, first published in 1940.

Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, philosopher who gained a reputation as a social anthropologist from working with the reports of other anthropologists, but who nevertheless felt qualified to write *How Natives Think*.

Sir James G. Frazer, social anthropologist and renowned as author of *The Golden Bough*.

'Primitive Mentality', *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, XX, 1940.

TO DR FRITZ MARTI

October 6, 1946

Dear Dr Marti:

I do wish I had a better opportunity to talk with you at Kenyon College. I hope we meet again.

In an old letter of yours (1942) you ask if I would say that the "various religions are mere contingent disguises of a pure philosophical truth." Not exactly that: I would say "are contingent adaptations of a pure metaphysical truth" (primarily experiential, ie, revealed). I think this follows almost inevitably from the axiom "the mode of knowledge follows the mode of



the nature of the knower." (I certainly would not use the word "mere"). For me *una veritas in variis signis varie resplendet—ad maiorem gloriam Dei*.

I was pleased by the reception of my discussion at Kenyon. However, I think most of the audience was "liberal". And my interest is not in putting all religions on the same level by way of latitudinarianism, but in a demonstration of real equivalences; hence most of my work deals with strictly orthodox forms of Christianity, and hence the manner in which I discussed the present problem by the words *alter Christus*.

Very sincerely,

Dr Fritz Marti, Chevy Chase, Maryland, USA.

AKC had given a talk at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio as part of a conference entitled 'The Heritage of the English Speaking Peoples and their Responsibility' (October 4–6, 1946). This was later published in the conference proceedings (which bore the title of the conference) as 'For What Heritage and to Whom Are the English-speaking Peoples Responsible?'

TO DR VASUDEVA SAHARAN AGRAWALA

March 23, 1939

My dear Mr Agrawala:

I am very happy to receive your reprints announcing such wonderful finds. It will be impossible for me to write you an article in time for the Shah Volume, but I shall be very happy if you render some one of the articles you mentioned, already printed, in Hindi.

I should say that it is futile to search for meanings in the Samhitas which are not the meanings of the Upanishads. I cannot believe that anything taught in the Upanishads was not known to the mantras, and this makes it inconceivable that they came into being without an understanding of their meaning. I do however believe that Indian scholars, in order to fortify their position as against the profanity and puerility of European scholarship, must nowadays make use of the *philosophia perennis* as a whole and not only of its Indian forms. An interpretation of the Vedas is not really an interpretation of *Indian* metaphy-



sics, but of *metaphysics*. It is also possible to add very much to the understanding of western scriptures if they are read in the light of the Indian *atmavidya*.

I expect you have seen my article in the *Q. J. Mythic Society*, on the "Inverted Tree". My interest is in doctrines that are *true*, rather than because they are *Indian*. The *philosophia perennis*—our *sanatana dharma* is not a private property of any time, or place, or people, but the birth-right of humanity.

Very sincerely,

Dr Vasudeva Saharan Agrawala was superintendent of Indian Museums, New Delhi.

*Samhitas*, are oldest of the Indian scriptures; while the Upanishads are the latest of the *śruti* to take written form. "Each branch of the *Vedas* consists of three portions: 1) the *samhita* or mantra portion . . . , 2) the *Brāhmaṇa* portion which contains the elaborate expositions of the various *karmas* or rituals for which mantras have been composed in the corresponding *samhita* portion . . . 3) the *āranyaka* or speculative portion of the *Vedas*. . . . Instead of the word *mantra*. . . he ought to have said *samhita* which contains *mantras* and other texts.' (courtesy of Sri Keshavram N. Iengar, Bangalore, India). 'The Inverted Tree', *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, XXIX, 1938. *Atmavidya* = Self-knowledge.

TO RICHARD GREGG

January 29, 1940

My dear Richard:

I have been reading some more of your book, which I do not find easy. I am especially impressed by the citations from Peter Sterry—pure Vedanta! I shall get the book.

I am in full agreement on many points, necessarily so because I live in a world in which not only words, but all things are felt to be alive with meaning. A word without inherent meaning would be "mere noise": a merely "decorative" and insignificant art, a dead superfluity. That people have begun to think of poetry as a matter of sound only is sufficiently symptomatic (of the cave dweller's purely animal satisfaction with the shadows on his wall). In our view, the Divine Liturgy is explained as "like the fusion of sound with meaning" (in a word, the Indian thinks of words as sounds, written signs

being, if used at all, symbols of the sounds rather than of the meanings). Our present mentality is more and more contented with what is a dead, inanimate, incloquent environment. (I mean those "to whom such knowledge as is not empirical is considered as meaningless.") How it can be possible to go on living in such an environment is strange; one must presume that this is not *living*, but rather a mere existence or vegetation.★

I agree that the antithesis of realism and nominalism is ultimately resolved in the solipsism of the "only seer" (in whose vision we individually participate only); what this seer sees is itself, "the world picture painted by itself on the canvas of the Self (Sankara, like Peter Sterry). The reality of the picture is that of it's maker, neither an independent reality (extreme nominalism) nor an unreality (extreme realism).★★

I do feel you should look into Indian Rhetoric, with its discussion of "meaning" (Skr *artha* unites the senses "meaning" and "value" and could often be rendered by *intentio*) on various levels of reference, eg, obvious, underlying, and ultimate (anagogic); and its terms *rasa* ("flavour") and *vyanjana* ("suggestion", "overtone", originally also "flavour").

I think you are in danger of confusing the personal "how" of style with the necessary "how". In a perfectly educated and unanimous society (tradition always envisages unanimity, as does also science on a lower level of reference) everyone would say the same thing in the same way, the *only* way possible for perfect expression in the current language, whether Latin, Sanskrit, Chinese or visually symbolic. The same thing cannot be said *perfectly* in *two different* phrases, though both may refer to the same thing and can be understood by whoever is capable of understanding. One's own effort for clarity amounts to the search for the one and only, once for all expression of an idea. In the same way when one feels that anything *has* been said once for all, one prefers to quote, and not to paraphrase in "one's own words"—one must not confuse originality with novelty, whatever idea one has made one's own can come out from us as from an *origo*, regardless of how many times it may have come forth from others or to what extent the supposedly corresponding words or formula have become a cliché.

Very sincerely,

★ Dr Coomaraswamy frequently stated that modern man lives in a 'world of impoverished reality', citing a phrase of Wilbur Marshall Urban.

★★ On solipsism, cf the 'nonsense' limerick below, which is really not all nonsense:

There once was a man who said, "God  
Must find it exceedingly odd  
If he finds that this tree continues to be  
When there's no one about in the Quad."

Dear Sir, your astonishment's odd:  
I am always about in the quad.  
And that's why the tree  
Will continue to be,  
Since observed by yours faithfully, God.

Richard Gregg,

*Peter Sterry, Platonist and Puritan, 1613–1672, A Selection from his writings with a biographical and critical study by Vivian De Sola Pinto, 1934.*

TO RUTH NANDA ANSHEN

November 8, 1946

Dear Nanda:

"To know and to be are the same thing"; this was not, as is commonly supposed, the meaning of Parmenides' words (fr 5): *to gar auto noein estin te kai einai*. This simply means that "that which can be thought is the same as that which can be" (see Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* 4th ed, 1930, p 173, n 2). Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.9.5, quotes Parmenides' words, but although by this time it was possible for an infinitive to be the subject of a sentence (and in fact Plotinus uses *to einai* as subject in *Enneads* 3.7.6), his citation of Parmenides' words is to show that "in the immaterial, knowledge and the known are the same"; and while this implies that *there* the knower, knowledge and the known are the same, what is actually predicated is hardly more than the Scholastic *adequatio rei et intellectus*—Plato's "making that in us which thinks like unto the objects of its thought", which *if* they be eternal and divine, will restore our being to its "original nature" (*Timaeus* 90). It seems to have been St Augustine who first explicitly enunciated that *in divinis* to live, to be, and to know are one and the same thing (*De Trin* 6.10.11; In *Joan Evang* 99.4; and *Conf* 13.11; also *synthesis*,



p 99). To be what one knows is not a *given* status, but one to be achieved. What is presently true is that "as one's thinking is, such one *becomes*" (*yac cittas tanmayo bhavati*; and it is because of this that thinking should be purified and transformed, for were it as centered upon God as it is now upon things sensibly perceptible, "Who would not be liberated from his bondage?" (*Maitri Upanishad* VI.34.4.6).

In my opinion *yac cittas tanmayo bhavati*, *Maitri UP* VI.34.4 (or its English equivalent as above) would be the best motto for you. Second best would be to use Parmenides' words without translation, leaving the reader to make what he can of them.

In any case, "to know = to be" is only true for us to the extent that we *are*, not for so long as we are *not yet geworden was wirr sint*.

Cordially,

Ruth Nanda Anshen was editor of the Science and Culture series published by Harper Brothers. She wished to use the sentence discussed here as a motto. *Synthesis* = *An Augustine Synthesis*, Erich Przywara; see Bibliography. (fr 5) refers to the fragment in H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*; see Bibliography.

TO GEORGE SARTON

July 7, 1942

Dear Sarton:

You had originally asked for 5,000 words. If the enclosed is under present conditions too long, you must try to cut it down. I cut out much on page 3.

You may be interested to know that I've had considerable correspondence with Jaeger lately. I find his belief in only one *civilization* properly to be so called—*viz* Greek (expressed in *Paideia*) rather disconcerting and nearly as dangerous as the doctrine of one superior race.

Very sincerely,

George Sarton, professor of the history of science, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

Werner Jaeger, classicist and professor at Harvard University; author of *Paideia*, 1943.

TO MR R. F. C. HULL

Date uncertain

Dear Mr Hull:

Re *Vedanta Sutra* II.2.28:

In general one must take into account the proposition that knowledge depends upon *adequatio rei et intellectus*.

Also that both Buddhists and Vedantists recognize a double truth: one of opinion, convention, pragmatic, empirical; the other of knowledge, certainty, intellectual; ie, relative and absolute.

Now first, as to the "elephant". The whole allusion is contained in the words *bravisi nir-ankusatvatte tundasya*. *Ankusa* = elephant goad, or any hook; *tunda* = beak, snout, trunk. The phrase is a technicality, and is represented by Thibaut's words, "You can make what arbitrary statement you please". More literal, but less intelligible to a reader would be "You can say what you like, but it's all like guiding an elephant by its trunk when you have no goad". Thus the difference between Thibaut and Deussen is more apparent than real, and I think you might stick to the former.

Of course, to me, the whole controversy is stupid, because both are agreed on the distinction of relative from real truth. Neither is it the Buddhist position that *vijnana* is any more real than any other of the five *skandhas* that constitute the life of the empirical Ego that "is not my Self". But *vijnana* may stand for the four components of conscious existence, so that *sa-vijnana kaya* = soul and body, "soul" being the same as "empirical Ego". You ask if the Buddhist argument (4) is meant to be fallacious; I think you might call it a "straw man"

In (9), "the son of a barren mother" is a stock expression for anything without potentiality of existence.

The argument in (11) is very interesting, because it is actually the well known *nil agit in seipsum*, first enunciated in the West by Plato. From it, it necessarily follows that *duo sunt in homine*.

It is also very interesting to find in the whole passage a

defence of the actuality of appearances, against the current (erroneous) supposition that Vedanta denies the reality of the world of appearances, as such. Even a mirage is a real "mirage". But obviously nothing that is an appearance can be called "real" in the same sense as that which appears; no image is as "real" as that of which it is an image. The word "phenomenon" itself has always an implied "of something"; the verb "appear" must have an implied subject.

The Buddhist argument in (12) seems to me fallacious; but here, again, I think we are dealing with a "straw man". However, taking it as it stands, the Vedantist reply in (17) is very good.

The Vedantist "witness" is, of course, the "only seer", ie, the Self (of the self) of the Upanishads. Sankara always assumes that the Buddhist denied this Self, which was not the case; it is the Self in which the Buddha himself "takes refuge" and commends others to do the same; it is called "Self, the Lord of self" in *Sn*.\*

In your very last comment marked (14), I don't see how both subject and object can both be regarded as "self-proved". "Self-proved" can only refer to a percipient, because it cannot be known as an object to itself; the well known proposition that "the eye cannot see itself", though it proves itself by the act of its perceiving—similarly in the case of the Self that one *is*, but cannot *know*. Whatever can be known objectively *cannot* be my Self.

Sincerely,

\* Cf *Dhammapada* 160: 'The Self is Lord of self; who else could be the Lord?' Mr R. F. C. Hull, Thaxted, Essex, England, was translating Georg Misch's *Der Weg in die Philosophie* (1926), which consisted of many quotations from the Hindu scriptures; Mr Hull had written to AKC for help in clarifying several points.

*Sn*, probably *Sutta Nipata*, an early Pali scripture.



TO MR PAUL GRIFFITH

July 11, 1944

Dear Sir:

Thank you for your inquiry. I appreciate the importance of public opinion and wish I could cooperate with you in this most timely undertaking because India is the most misrepresented country in the world, and it is about time America's intelligence on the subject was no longer insulted.

A book like the *Bhagavad Gita* would be particularly difficult to illustrate. A metaphysical treatise hardly lends itself to illustration. In Indian copies, almost the only illustration ever found is that of the *mise en scène*, Arjuna in converse with Sri Krishna; such illustrations are of the type reproduced by L. D. Barnett's translation, published by Dent, which you could easily find.

A brave attempt to illustrate the *Mahabharata* as a whole has been made in the Poona edition, now in the course of publication. A considerable part of this has appeared, and copies are in numerous American libraries. To illustrate the *Mahabharata*, easy as it would be (in a certain sense and extremely difficult in another) [would be] really extraneous to the content of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

To illustrate the *Bhagavad Gita* and its whole background would be possible, but an immense undertaking, and would amount to an illustration of Indian culture generally, including the mythology. I am afraid my feeling is that it is an almost impracticable scheme to propose one illustrated magazine article on the subject. Nanda Lal Bose, whom you mention, is the best, or one of the best of the modern Indian painters. If time permits why not communicate with him at Santiniketan, Bolpur, Bengal, British India, directly. I shall be very glad to hear from you if I can be of further use.

Yours very truly,

Paul Griffith, London.

TO STEPHEN HOBHOUSE

October 21, 1944

Dear Mr Hobhouse:

With further reference to your last book on William Law, on the subject of the divine "love and wrath", I write to express some surprise that you do not take into consideration the solutions of the problem in other theologies, notably the Islamic and Hindu. Thus, in Islam, heaven and hell are called the *reflections* of the divine mercy and majesty respectively; and, I may add also, an ultimate *apokatastasis* of Iblis is foreseen. Your words in the middle of p. 375 ("It means . . . evil or cowardly will") are almost exactly a statement of the theology of the *mixta persona* of Mitra-Varunau in Hindu scripture, where Mitra (lit, "friend") is the Sun ("not him whom all men see, but whom not all men know with the mind"), the "light of lights", and Varuna is the stern judge of the dark Sky; these are also respectively the *sacerdotium* and the *regnum, in divinis*; and this world of light and darkness is the concept and product of the said conjoint principles which are themselves a unity, the "Supreme Identity" of God and Godhead. Thus, there is no opposition of light and darkness *ab intra* ("lion and lamb lie down together") but inevitably *ab extra*; for a world without contraries would not be a "world" (locus of compossibles), while (as Cusa says) God is to be found beyond them, so that the Hindu speaks of "liberation from the pairs of opposites".

On page 291 you discuss the "soldier" and the Muhammadan position, to which you might have added the Indian as stated in the *Bhagavad Gita*. There is a point that you ignore in these positions, and that is the warrior's vocation, as such, does not permit of fighting with hatred, but only of a fighting well in a given cause. The most notable illustration of the consequences of this takes place in connection with Ali, who had nearly overcome his opponent when the latter spit in his face. Ali immediately drew back, and refused to take advantage of his superior position. "Why?", the opponent asked. Ali replied, "It was impossible for me to kill you in anger." This naturally led to an ultimate reconciliation. I feel that one should not allude to a doctrine like the Islamic doctrine of the *jihad* without a full grasp of all its implications.



With reference to the "fire" of life, etc, on page 279, and to the "wrath" as the wheel of life, these ideas are expressed in India in almost identical terms, in the notion of the withholding of the fuel from our fire, and perhaps most notably in the Buddha's 'First Sermon' in which he describes all things in the world as being "on fire".

My general point is that the fundamental doctrines of religion are to be found in every religion; and that, especially when expounding the mystics it is of the greatest possible advantage to bring together and point out these equivalents, which throw so much light on one another as very often to dispose of difficulties that seem to inhere in any one formulation taken by itself.

Yours very sincerely,

Stephen Hobhouse, editor of *Selected Mystical Writings of William Law*, London, 1940; identified on p.63.

*Jihad*, holy war; "a religious war with those who are unbelievers in the mission of Muhammad . . . an incumbent religious duty . . . there are two *jihads*: *al-jihadu 'l-Akbar* . . .", the greater holy war which is against oneself, and the *jihadu 'l-Asghar*, against unbelievers, which is the "lesser holy war".

TO F. S. C. NORTHROP

November 6, 1944

Dear Professor Northrop:

I read with the deepest interest your brilliant paper in the Hawaii Symposium. I entirely agree with you in this main premise that Oriental philosophies start from an immediate apprehension of reality, and in their extension are not procedures by abstraction, but statements about the reality in terms of analogy, for the sake of understanding and communication. I am not at all sure, however, whether it is safe to use the word "aesthetic" univocally for what is directly apprehended by the sense organs, and what is immediately apprehended when the direction of vision is (as for Plato and the Upanishads) "inverted", so that it regards not the "seen", but the "seer". Of course, we do use a corresponding term, *saksat* ("eye to eye") in the Upanishads, but there is a clearly understood hierarchy of



*saksat*, *paroksa* and *saksat* (visible, occult, visible), but it would not be supposed by anyone that the two visions are both a matter of *sensible* perception. If there is one thing certain, it is that the *Brahman-Atman* is not a knowable object in the sense that we know a blue area when we see it.

My position is that of the Oriental before the Western influences (see your p. 21); in this connection, incidentally, your words "not a Moslem" would only apply here if you intend a strictly exoteric Islam; there can be no question but that, as Jahangir remarked, "Your Vedanta is the same as our Tasawwuf". In Jaisi or in Kabir, what is "Hindu" and what is "Moslem"? in Rumi, too, who can distinguish the "Neo-Platonic" from the Hindu and Buddhist factors? Cf also Guénon who knows both Arabic and Sanskrit: his personal affiliations are Islamic, but he prefers as a rule to expound the *philosophia perennis* from Indian sources. I hold with Jeremias that "the various cultures are the dialects of one and the same universal language of the spirit", expounded *semper, et ubique et ab omnibus*.

I fully agree with your depreciation of the translations by "mere linguists"; I virtually never use a text without having consulted and considered its original Latin, Greek or Sanskrit, and though I am more dependent in the case of Persian, even there I do what I can; the versions I use in print are usually my own. What I have observed is that it is precisely the mere linguists who most of all emphasize the oppositions or differences of East and West; as Schopenhauer puts it, they exhaust themselves in trying to show that even when the same things are said, the words mean something different. Of course, that is largely because the mere linguists, though nowadays they are mostly rationalists (and at the same time the veriest amateurs in philosophy, as some even confess), inherit (mostly quite unconsciously) all sort of Christian prejudices, moralistic and other. What has most impressed me is that East and West (and for that matter, other "dialects", too, eg. American Indian) have been forever saying the same thing; and that not only often in the same idiom, but so far as Greek and Sanskrit are concerned, using cognate words, so that Sanskrit could be rendered into Greek more directly and truly than into any other language, though Latin also lends itself.

To take a specific case or two: I would say that the

fundamental agreement of Plato with Vedanta is most conspicuous in their common doctrine of the "two selves", mortal and immortal, that dwell together in us; the doctrine of the inner and outer man which survives in the Scholastic *duo sunt in homine*, and in countless phrases of our daily speech such as "my better self". If, as you say, the Western "other self" is "postulated", then it is no more than the empirical self or ego, and hence the doubt about immortality. If the East has no such doubts, it is because there, the "other self" (identified with Brahma, the ineffable) is apprehended immediately. But surely, it is only for a "modern" that the "other self" is a mere postulate; Socrates' *daimon* was no postulate for him, but an often very inconvenient "Duke" (*hegemon*, Skr *Netr*) "who always holds me back from what 'I' want to do"; cf his words, "Socrates you may doubt, but not the truth". Actually, our own "conscience" (= Socratic *daimon*) as Apuleius first, I believe, said; and = to the Scholastic *synteresis*, *inwył*) is not a postulate for us, but something immediately known.

It appears to me that the real postulates (and notably "I" as a denotation of our inconstant personality, which never stops to *be*, as was equally explicitly remarked by Plato, Plutarch and the Hindus and Buddhists) cannot be regarded as having any more validity than attaches to the transient phenomena from which they are "abstracted"; like the "laws of science", they have only a convenient value, permitting men to make predictions with a high, but never absolute, probability value. To speak of testing the truth of postulates by experiment is only to argue in a circle; I do not see how any *theoria* could be proved or disproved experimentally, and, in fact, the Oriental position would be that whatever is really true can never be demonstrated, but only realized. What experiment proves regarding a postulate is not its truth, but its utility, for the particular end in view. That the postulates participate in the transience of the phenomena from which they are abstracted, moreover, appears in the fact that the postulates are always changing, being discarded and replaced by others.

The unity of eastern and western doctrines could be equally well demonstrated from a monograph on the traditional psychology, from equivalent iconographies, and in many other ways. As I see it, your basic "opposition" of East and West is recognizable *only* if we set over against each other [the] *modern*



West and the surviving tradition of the East; for example, Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* is sheer pathos from an Oriental point of view, which would argue *cogito ergo est*, and in doing so would be in word for word agreement with, for example, Philo. I wonder, too, if in making the opposition, you are not overlooking the whole Western *via negativa*: Dionysius, Eckhart, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Cusa, and all that aspect of European culture which is a closed book to the modern man, so much so that our Middle Ages are every bit as "mysterious" to him as the East itself—is it really two very different things that both appear so strange?

To be sure, as you say, the postulations are necessary for modern technology. But is modern technology necessary for man, I mean for the "good life" and "felicity"? The notion of an everlasting raising of the standard of living, the perpetual creation of new wants (by advertisement, etc) is really in order that someone may make money out of supplying them after which they become "necessities"—has that any real connection with the quality of life? Is it not as much as to will and decree that men shall never be *content*? The argument is still in a circle; it is only after it has been assumed that modern technology is necessary that it follows that we must "postulate". From what I regard as the Christian and Oriental point of view, all this production for its own sake, and with it the postulates it demands, are *luxuries*, rather than means to the good life. Could one, in fact, think of anything more "luxurious" than the ego-postulate?

I think we are dealing with fundamental problems, the importance of which cannot be exaggerated. I hope we shall have the opportunity to talk them over again some day. I could almost wish that there were an opportunity, too, to present somewhere in print a rejoinder to your article on the above lines.

With very kind regards,

Filmer Stuart Cuckow Northrop, professor of philosophy, Yale University,  
New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

The Hawaii Symposium

Dr Coomaraswamy enlarges the famous 'Vincentian Canon' expounded by  
St Vincent of Lerins as the test for true Catholicity and orthodoxy in belief:



that which has been believed *semper, et ubique et ab omnibus*—that which has been believed 'always, everywhere and by everyone'.

TO F. S. C. NORTHROP

Date uncertain

Dear Professor Northrop:

Many thanks for your kind letter. My criticism rests upon the fact that you speak of "the most profound and mature insights" of East and West and seem to ignore the break in Western thought that takes place with the shift (ca 1200) from realism to nominalism; one cannot "compare" East and West unless one makes it clear *what* West one is thinking of—what I assert is the identity of the "most profound and mature insights", which were an essential part of Christianity once, but are ignored or even denied by the exoteric Christianity of today, which virtually overlooks the Godhead altogether and considers only God\*. The "Supreme Identity" is one essence with two natures, human and inhuman, light and darkness, mercy and majesty, God and Godhead, ie, humanly speaking, good and evil. In other words also, finite and infinite; assuredly, as for the Greeks, the infinite is from the point of view of finite beings, "evil".

As I see it, neither civilization has anything to learn from the other. How often I respond to Western inquirers by saying "Why seek wisdom in India? You have it all in the tradition of your own which you have only forgotten. The value of the Eastern tradition for you is not that of a difference, but that it *can remind* you of what you have forgotten."

Now the East can differ from the West in its point of view, in that the one can be Traditional and the other anti-traditional, and here a mutual understanding is impossible. However, I myself am so perpetually accustomed to thinking simultaneously in terms of Eastern and Western tradition as to be able to say that my perception of their identity is immediate.

"Why consider the inferior philosophers?", as Plato says; and that is why I can say that "the most profound and mature insights" of East and West are the same, while if we are thinking only of the modern West, I fully agree as to their

difference. To agree to differ is no solution. If you will not take Plato, Plotinus, Cusa, Boehme, Dante, etc, as representing the "most profound and mature insights" of the West, agreement and cooperation will be ruled out, except upon those lowest levels of reference on which there is always room to quarrel. The notion of a common humanity is not enough for peace; for what is needed is our common divinity, and the recognition that nothing is really "dear" but for the sake of the immortal principle that is one and the same in all men Platonic love as understood by Ficino!

Jesus never emphasized the "*individual*" value of every soul, but the *universal* value in every soul, a very different story. Eckhart was right in saying that *all* scripture cries aloud for freedom from self; and it is only to the extent that we practice self-naughting, or at least acknowledge that "I" is a postulate valid only for practical (and ultimately always "selfish") purposes and not a truth (as Plato, Plutarch, *et al*, very well know), that we can approach the grounds of peace.

I shall look forward to seeing you when opportunity affords, and thanks for the invitation. I have much to talk over with Goodenough, too.

I'm just, as it happens, attending Dr Marquette's lectures on "Mysticism". He also sees there the only practical solution.

PS: I think the problem of truth as something that can only be recognized but cannot be "proved" has a good deal to do with the importance attached to *faith* (assent to a credible proposition) in India as in the West. Of course, I distinguish *faith* from "fideism" which only amounts to credulity, as exercised in connection with postulates, slogans and all kinds of wishful thinking. Cf *Tripura Rahasya*, Hemacuda Section, IX, 88: "That which is self-evident without the necessity to be proved, is alone real; not so other things." This is with reference to the difference between understanding the universe and understanding the "space" or continuum, identified with Brahma—*akasa*, *kha* (and *loka* in its absolute sense).

Sincerely,

\* And which is seen currently to have less and less time for God, preoccupied as it is with all manner of social questions.



F. S. C. Northrop, as above.  
 Erwin R. Goodenough, professor of the history of religion, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

TO F. S. C. NORTHROP

June 5, 1946

Dear Prof Northrop:

I am delighted to receive your book and offer my congratulations; I have read considerable parts of it, and in many passages admire your penetration. I am still fully convinced that the metaphysics of East and West are essentially the same until the time of the Western deviation from the common norms, beginning in the 14th century. I am a little surprised you do not make any reference to Guénon who has treated these problems at length. As to the identities: I would cite, for example, the axiom that *duo sunt in homine*, one that becomes and one that is, the former unreal because inconstant, the latter constant and therefore real. It is interesting that the modern psychologists (Jung, Hadley, Sullivan, Peirce, etc) have rediscovered the unreality of the empirical Ego; to realise which is the beginning of wisdom and the *sine qua non* for happiness.

Now a few notes: p 13, on the testing of theory by fact; hypothesis by fact, no doubt, but surely not *teoria* by fact. Hypothesis is the product of thinking, reasoning; but theory is just that which is seen, and for Plato, Aristotle and the East alike, "*nous* is infallible". So fact cannot prove or disprove a theory, but only illustrate it. Even so for Spinoza still, *Veritas norma sui et falsi est!* To propose to test theory by fact is simply pragmatism.

Your recognition of the positive reality of the "experience" of Nirvana is admirable. However, it would not be correct to identify Nirvana with the "aesthetic continuum", ie, Ether; in Buddhism, it is explicit that Nirvana lies *beyond* the experience of the sole reality of the infinitely etherial realm, and beyond the distinction of experience from in-experience. Necessarily so, because "in" Nirvana there is no process while the experience of the undifferentiated aesthetic continuum is still, as such, something that "takes place", and an "event"; the *bhavagga*, "summit level of becoming", is still in the field of



becoming and even from these highest "heavens" there is still a "further escape".

P 359: It cannot be said that Hinayana Buddhism survives in India. P 361, the Upanishads are only partly in verse; for example, much of the *BU* is in prose. Passim: I would not call Nehru "cultivated"; he is very ignorant of Indian culture, which he has only quite recently begun to study in English translations! If one is discussing East and West it is never any use to quote Westernized Orientals, whose point of view will necessarily be that of contemporary Europeans. Incidentally, too, Jinnah is equally ignorant of things Islamic.

p 487: The Christian claim to "perfection" presents no difficulty to an Oriental, who can readily grant it. It is merely that the Christian denial of perfection to Oriental metaphysics is an obstacle to Christian understanding. p 343: the Sea, for the East, is *not* a symbol of time, but of undifferentiated eternity. As for Eckhart, Silesius, etc, the Sea is that in which the "rivers" (streams of consciousness, "individualities") lose their name and configuration, ie, their limitations—*panta rei*. To Eckhart's "plunge in" corresponds such Pali terms as *nibban'o-gadham*, "the dive, or immergence, into Nirvana."

There are many things in which I am in fullest agreement with your interpretations; but I am still very sure that, as before modern times, all your differentiations from the East will be found to break down!

PS: Suppose we grant that at least the modern "western" position is what you call "theoretical", and the Eastern [attitude] founded in an *Erlebnis* [experience]. This does not mean that the "Eastern" position is "empirical" or "aesthetic", although it is of a reality *erlebt*, not inferred. The great "experiment" consists in the arrest of all aesthetic experience, which can be only in terms of subject and object. The Self can no more know itself than the eye can see itself.\* It is only the transient Ego that can be "known", like other natural phenomena, external to Self. That the Self itself is unknowable, otherwise than by negation of whatever and all it is not, coincides with Jung's position (cf *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, 1928, p 268, where he contrasts the known Ego with the unknown Self); I mention him only because he is a typically "Western" mentality, whose "orientalism" is quite

spurious—he expressly “repudiates metaphysics”. All this makes me very uncomfortable when you speak of ultimate reality as “an aesthetically perceived continuum”; the very fact of perceptibility rules anything out from ultimate reality, all perception involving relations. In Buddhism, the “realm of naught whatever” is only 6th in a hierarchy of eight states, all regarded as “relative”; Nirvana is explicitly and emphatically an “escape” from all these states.

Kindest regards,

\*On the face of it, this sentence might be taken to imply some deficiency in the Self, *per impossible*. God cannot be known as object; ‘only God can know God’, as a Christian or other monotheist might say. Ontologically, God’s knowledge of Himself is perfect and coincides with His Being. On the supra-ontological level, that of the Godhead or Self, all distinctions, all positive statements are transcended by excess of meaning, and one can only say ‘not this, not this’; hence, the ultimate necessity of a negative theology and a *via negativa* which, however, in no sense imply privation in the Supreme Principle.

F. S. C. Northrop, as above. In 1946, Prof Northrop published *The Meeting of East and West*, a pioneering effort in the comparative analysis of cultures and a book widely acclaimed in its time.

TO F. S. C. NORTHROP

July 12, 1946

Dear Northrop:

Re atomism, in your book, pp 262–263: it is, of course, sufficiently obvious that the notions of “indivisibles with magnitude” involves an antinomy. But that does not seem to be what the old atomists postulated. Relying on data in Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p 336, I note that the Greek atoms are “mathematically” (ie, logically) but not “physically” (ie, really) divisible. In other words, they have conceptual but not actual extension. Now Aristotle himself has a doctrine of atomic time (*atomos nun*), *Physics* IV, 13, 222 . . . , and this is the exact equivalent of the Buddhist doctrine of the “moment” (*khana*) which has no duration but “in” which all accidents supervene, and of which the succession never ceases. Similarly in the



Islamic doctrine of *wagt*, for which Macdonald inferred a Buddhist origin; and the whole idea survives in the formula "God is creating the whole world now, this instant."

Very well. It seems to me that we cannot but consider at the same time moments-without-duration and points-without-extension. Are not the latter what the old "atoms" imply? Remember that they are "logically but not physically divisible"; so, like the "moments", they have content but are not measurable. Thus the antinomy "indivisible magnitude" seems to vanish; it does not appear that a "really-indivisible-magnitude" was ever asserted. The fact that we have now "split atoms" (theoretically into protons, etc, and also experimentally) has no bearing on the problem; it only means that what *we called* "atoms" were not really the same thing as the old philosophical atoms, ie, "points" (Skr *bindu*—*AV*) without extension though not without content. The best illustration of such a "point" is afforded by the centre of the circle which has no extension and yet "in" which all radii coincide. This also would lead us to a kind of explanation of exemplarism (as I showed in *HJAS*, I) and to Bonaventura's image of God as a circle of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere.

Moreover, just as all "moments" are in one sense the same moment, so in one sense all atoms are the same atom (cf note 3 in Burnet i C); the atomic now being that which gives its meaning to past and future (time flowing out of eternity) and the atomic point being that which gives its meaning to extension (space deriving from the point as "size without size, the principle of size").

PS: a minor point not connected with the above: p 273, second and third lines of middle paragraph—the first "formal" can be taken *strictu sensu*, but surely the second "formal" should read: "actual".

Very sincerely,

F. S. C. Northrop, as above.

*Early Greek Philosophy*, J. Burnet, London, 1930.

'Vedic Exemplarism', AKC, in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, I, 1936.



TO F. S. C. NORTHROP

July 25, 1946

Dear Northrop:

Your letter is of great interest, and at the least I think that we may overcome at least such disagreements as are based on the particular terms employed.

You cite again the Roman Catholic attitude. Does their "belief" (opinion) in the exclusive perfection of Christianity make it true? They could assimilate Aristotle; now Aristotle is so "Buddhist" (phrase for phrase in many cases) that some have assumed (as I do not) "influence". In other words, much that Aquinas did get from Aristotle (and that is plenty) he might have got from India, if the same kind of contacts had then been available. Some of my R.C. friends in England (one of whom calls Sri Ramakrishna an *alter Christus*) are most seriously considering, in view of the present contact, *what* ought to be the future attitude of R.C. Christianity to "Oriental studies". So that I don't think my argument for real difference can be based on the hitherto R.C. position.

I wonder if the "tasting of the flower" is so very different from "O, taste and see that the Lord is good"? Suppose I modified one of your sentences thus: "Whatever one has misunderstanding between peoples . . . (it is always *assumed* that there is) an underlying difference in their philosophy and their religion"?

I read Jones' review in the *N. Y. Times Lit Sup*\* with interest. I think he hardly gets the meaning of your "aesthetic continuum". But I must not go on now. Needless to say, there is very much in your book that I greatly admire and fully agree with, and our discussion of points of disagreement in no way diminishes that.

Very sincerely,

\*Presumably the *New York Times Book review*, the *Literary Supplement* being a weekly section of the *Times* of London.

F. S. C. Northrop, as above.

To F. S. C. NORTHROP

July 28, 1946

Dear Northrop:

I have no longer any strong objection to your phrase "indeterminate aesthetic continuum", since although the East like the West is always pointing out that "the eye cannot see itself", still finds it unavoidable to use such expressions as "seeing", "tasting", "knowing", etc, with reference to the ultimate reality, as regards the actual phrase "disinterested aesthetic contemplation" (taken, of course, from current Western usage) I have nearly always put it in quotes, and more than once said that as it stands it represents an antinomy, "disinterested" and "aesthetic" being really incompatibles. After all, as the primary application of language is to temporal "things", one is obliged, as all expositors have recognized, to use empirical analogies.

Christian Logos and Father correspond to *Mitravarunau* or *parapara Brahman*—the "two natures" predicated by both West and East. The Father is the "Godhead". Eckhart's "free as the Godhead in its non-existence" is Nirvana, "the unborn, unmade, unbecome, incomposite, which if it were not, there would be no way of escape from the born, made, composite. "I do not see in what sense you can say that the Father "transcends Nirvana" unless you mean simply that the Christian regards it for some reason as a preferable concept. One must not overlook the Father's "impassibility".

Again, "Logos" = *sabda* Brahman, Father = *asabda* Brahman (*sabada* = sound, utterance: *asabda* = silent, unuttered).

Very sincerely,

F. S. C. Northrop, as above.

To MR HUSZAR

August 8, 1947

Dear Mr Huszar:

I read your paper with pleasure and am very glad you are

presenting it; and I like your choice of a *spruchwort* from André Gide. I have often referred to the provincial limitation of Hutchins' position, eg, in my speech at Kenyon College last year and in *Am I My Brother's Keeper?* But these people are almost immovable, as I know from correspondence with and protests made to the Dean of St John's College and the Editor of the "Great Books". In contrast, my own habitual method is to treat the terms of the common universe of discourse in a worldwide context; eg, my "Symplegades" in *Studies . . . offered in Homage to George Sarton . . .*, 1947, and in *Time and Eternity*, Ascona, Switzerland, 1947.

I know of no better study of the level at which international contacts should be made than Marco Pallis' *Peaks and Lamas*.

Very sincerely,

Mr Huszar is not identified.

St John's College, in its list of 'Hundred Best Books' prescribed for its students did not include even one work from East of Suez and despite protests from both students and AKC, did not alter the list.

*Am I My Brother's Keeper?*, New York, 1947; see Bibliography.

*Peaks and Lamas*, see Bibliography.

TO WALLACE BROCKWAY

July 29, 1946

Dear Mr Brockway:

In reply to yours of July 15, received today; I feel compelled to say what I have often said before, that I am truly appalled by the provincialism which can [be seen] at St John's College and in your series of "Great Books"; it is an aspect of the extremely isolationist tendencies of American education in practice at the present day, despite all the lip-service to the "One World" idea. I consider that for the kind of education we are considering, that to be cosmopolitan in the best sense of the word it is indispensable for the European to be acquainted with not only the great books in spoken Western languages, and Latin and Greek; but also with the great books of the whole East; or if we speak of language (as distinct from the books to be known in



translation), then I would say that a European is not educated in the full meaning of the word if he cannot read both Latin and Greek and at least one of the classical languages of the East, Arabic, Sanskrit, or Chinese. Conversely, the time has come for orientals to read Greek. That you ask me, supposedly an Orientalist, to be of any assistance in your immediate problem illustrates what I am saying; such assistance from me is only possible because I am familiar with the Western as well as the Eastern traditions, or putting this in terms of languages, because I do read Latin and Greek and the chief spoken European languages.

I will consider whether there is anything further that I can do. In the meantime, in the Bibliographies for Art, and for Beauty, I suggest that my own books, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (Harvard University Press, 1934), *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* (Luzac, London, 1943) and *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* (Luzac, London, 1946)—which latter includes long translations from St Thomas and Ulrich. There are prescribed reading in some University courses. In the preface to the last mentioned I wrote: "Whoever makes use of these three books *and* of the sources referred to in them will have a fairly complete view of the doctrine about art that the greater part of mankind has accepted from prehistoric times until yesterday."

I put forward no new theories of my own; but I do say that without a knowledge of the material I deal with, the pathetic fallacy in the teaching of art history is inevitable, and as inevitable as it is *rampant*. I add that under the heading of Nature should certainly be included R. C. Collingwood's *Philosophy of Nature*. Re Art, see also the Bibliography in my *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* (Luzac, London, 1943, p 59). Other suggestions will come to mind, no doubt, but in the meanwhile perhaps you will be kind enough to send on those above to Mr Bernick.

Very sincerely,

Wallace Brockway was with *Encyclopaedia Britannica* at the time. *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* was later reissued under the title, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*; see Bibliography.

TO GRETCHEN WARREN

August 8, 1946

Dear Gretchen:

I have been looking at Collingwood's *Idea of Nature*, pp. 19–27, and see nothing alarming. I think Whitehead is quite right in saying “there is no nature (*scire licet, natura naturata*), in an instant” (ie, “mathematical instant containing no time lapse at all”). Also, “according to modern physics nothing whatever would be left” if all movement were to stop is obviously so because “motion” and “existence” are only two names of the same “thing”. One trouble for men like Collingwood is that they do not *start* by clearly defining the distinction between existence (*ex alio sistens*) and essence (*in seipso sistens*); so that it is not always clear what they mean by “existence”. Existence is always in some way and in some time observable, essence never. All existence is summed up in essence, which is “nothing”, ie, no one of those “things” that *exist* and all of which are perishable composites.

“Men feel that what cannot be put in terms of time is meaningless . . . [but] the notion of a static immutable being ought to be understood rather as signifying a process (or an “energy”, which is a better word), so intensely vivacious, in terms of time as extremely swift, so as to comprise beginning and end at one stroke” (W. H. Sheldon in *Modern Schoolman*, XXI, 133). *Plus la vie du moi s'identifie avec la vie du non-moi (le Soi), plus on vit intensément* (Abdul Hadi).

“Past and future are to thee a veil from God . . . cast fire on both (Rumi, *Mathnawi*, I, 2201–2). God: *ubi futurum et praeteritum coincidunt cum praesenti* (Nicholas of Cusa, *De vis Dei*, C.x), as also in Buddhism, of the Arahant, Freedman, Immortal, “for him there is neither past nor future” (S.1.141).

Whoever finds the “Now of Eternity” (containing no time-lapse at all) finds “nothing and all things”—all at once, not in a succession. *Present* vision of all that ever has been or shall be in the endless succession of past and future aeons can hardly be thought of as an “empty” life, though it be “void” of “things” in the sense that we experience them in succession, where they never stop to *be*, and we lose them as soon as we



have them, ie, instantly, which is the very "tragedy" of "existence".

AKC

Gretchen Warren, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

TO ALDOUS HUXLEY

August 10, 1944

Dear Mr Huxley:

Yours of August 4 reached me just after I had sent off to you my little tract on "Recollection", etc.

I do not understand what could be meant by becoming a good Catholic "for the sake of Christian *bhakti*". Surely, one only accepts a body of doctrine (such as that of the *philosophia perennis*) because of its self authenticating intelligibility and because it explains more things than are explained elsewhere. I quite agree that as a rule (to which there are individual exceptions) it is undesirable to exchange one religion for another. *Bhakti* is a general proposition, not to be connected exclusively with Christ or Krishna. The point is *sine desiderio mens non intelligit*. This applies to an understanding of "reality" by whatever name we call "It". Granted that *jnana*, *karma* and *bhakti* (the latter being love or loyalty, but literally *participation*) are in a hierarchy; this does not mean that they are mutually exclusive; even Sankaracarya "worshipped". Which of the three must predominate is a question of individual talent. All are legitimate, and all can be misused. Your own feeling about Kali is, as I see it, a purely sentimental reaction, quite as dangerous as any kind of devotion, however "blind"; one who "loves God" really, loves Him "in His darkness and His light."

I can't agree that "art" is mysterious; it is no more mysterious than anything else. Art is a kind of knowledge about how things, which it has been decided are desiderate, can be made. It is mainly modern aesthetics that has thrown a veil of "mystery" over "art", just as modern sentimentality has made a fool of prudence (so to speak), by treating it not as a



means to an end. The differentiation of styles is nothing but an example of the working of the principle that "nothing can be known but in the mode of the knower."

Your "Common Father" book, if it really deals with dogmatic equivalents, and not merely with the general agreement that one must "be good, sweet child", should be valuable. I have myself collected an enormous amount of "parallels", and cited very many in my articles; in fact, generally speaking, I dislike to expound *any* doctrine (such as that of the single essence and the two natures, or that of *lila* or any symbolism (such as that of "light", or the "chariot", or the "Symplegades")) from single sources only. There is, however, the difficulty, that one cannot, generally speaking, trust existing translations; and one does not know enough languages to be able to check on everything.

With kind regards,

*Postscript to above letter:*

You did not let me know whether Marco Palli's book reached you. My wife adds: your distrustful words about *bhakti* would be understandable if you were a Roman Catholic, faced with the pale and oversweet Catholicism of these times. Indeed, the R C Church is imitating the Protestant churches of the modern world, and is not *itself*.<sup>\*</sup> Even Thomism is only halfway back, so to speak, to Meister Eckhart, and *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Perhaps the Greek Church is still poor enough to be as clean as one can be in this environment. For you, it ought to be no longer a question of Christ or Krishna, but of a Principle that assumes every name by which His worshippers address Him.

We so much admire *Grey Eminence* that we cannot but regret the times when your "feelings" (taste) intervene. If I have learnt anything, it is never to "think" (will) for myself. In all these things my only will is to understand.

<sup>\*</sup> If this was true in 1944, it is *a fortiori* true today, after the more than sixty year debacle that has followed.

Aldous Huxley, popular novelist whose fashionableness peaked between the two World Wars. Later in his career he turned to non-fiction and wrote *Grey Eminence*, *The Perennial Philosophy*, etc.

'Recollection, Indian and Platonic', published as a Supplement to the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXIV, no. 2, 1944.

TO ALDOUS HUXLEY

September 28, 1944

Dear Mr Huxley:

I should like to begin by making it very clear that I fully agree with you that Charity (*maitri*, not *karuna*, however) is indispensable for Enlightenment; nor am I any exception to the rule that no one has ever hinted that because the end is beyond good and evil, the means may be so. I further agree with the "transcendent and immanent" point of view, and with the distinction of God from Godhead, in nature but not in essence. What I do not agree with is your apparent assumption that practitioners of human sacrifice are necessarily "uncharitable". I am aware that that would be a Buddhist point of view. That it would also be a Christian point of view is metaphysically explicable by the fact that in the particular Christian formulation, the sacrifice has been made once for all; that is why, while it is necessary for Moslems to make all killing of animals for food a sacrificial rite (the same for the Jews), this is not necessary for Christians. In the same way, I would not at all agree that the warrior's *dharma* is necessarily "uncharitable" or, for that matter, the hunter's; these ways would be uncharitable if followed by a *Brahman*, but not if followed by a *Ksatriya*. It is all a matter of "convenience" (in the technical sense of the word). At the same time I need hardly say that the fact that *we* are too compassionate to practice human sacrifice, or sometimes even to hunt, makes all the more contemptible our reckless disregard of the value of human life (I am referring to the industrial system in which *things* are more highly valued than the men who produce them) and our willingness to vivisect animals to save our own skins, as we imagine. I should say that the Aztec was truer to his Way than we are to ours.

I do not approach the great tradition, as you seem to do, to pick and choose in them what seems to me to be "right"; all coercion repels *me*, but who am I to pass judgement upon those who must use force, and are only at fault if they do so

incorrectly? No *Way* can be judged in isolation without regard to the environment it presupposes. On this point there is a very good Indian story of a Brahman who maintained the service of a Siva Lingam, to which he made offerings only of flowers, water and chant. It was in the deep woods. One day a hunter, who filled with devotion likewise, had in his own way placed on the Lingam pieces of raw flesh of his prey. The Brahman was infuriated, abused the hunter, and threw away his offerings. Suddenly Siva appeared, and graciously accepting the hunter's offering, pointed out to the Brahman that the hunter's devotion had been no less than his own, and that he, the Brahman, had given way to anger. We cannot judge of what is "right" for others, but only of what is right for us.

I am going to quote again from the friend from whom I have quoted before regarding your position:

One part of him wishes to be free, but the other part insists on making a number of reservations. . . . One hoped that *Grey Eminence* marked a more serious step in the direction of seeking a *guru*. It is apparent that what he needs most of all is an element of *bhakti* for the simple reason that though he does genuinely hanker after the truth and a unified existence, he fears to trust himself boldly into the hands of his aspiration; it is indeed 'abandonment' that is still most lacking in his attempt, due to regret at having to give up so much that is taken for granted in the modern world . . . hence the eclecticism which seeks to express itself in anthologies—one can be almost sure that though the quotations he will select will be fine in themselves, the choice will be influenced unduly by private preferences and dislikes. For instance, texts enjoining an attitude of *ahimsa* are more likely to be snapped up voraciously while the complementary texts connected with, say, *jihad* are as likely to be rejected as being uninspired; so also the traditions in which non-violence plays a great part such as the Gospels or Buddhism, will appeal to him, but he will find it difficult to sympathize impartially with warrior or hunting cultures. . . . He also continues to trust far too much to his powers of extracting the meaning of doctrines through a mere reading of texts. It is quite true, as Guénon said somewhere, that he who knows can often detect the real sense of a text even under the disguise of modern



distortions; but this is quite impossible for one who trusts to his academic training alone.

I shall send you shortly a paper of Schuon's on the Three Margas and am only sorry I have no copy of his important article on Sacrifice that I can send. I hope you duly received "On the One and Only Transmigrant" (which is mainly apropos of immanence).

Very sincerely,

Aldous Huxley, as above.

Marco Pallis, personal correspondence.

'On the One and Only Transmigrant', Supplement to the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXIV, no 2.

Frithjof Schuon, see Appendix.

TO ALDOUS HUXLEY

August 29, 1944

Dear Mr Huxley:

My adherence to the Traditional Philosophy is because it explains more in every field of thought than do any of our systemic philosophies; it can, indeed, explain everything, or account for everything, to the extent that explanations are logically possible. In the various religions this philosophy is translated into the modes of the knowers.

Let us take it for granted that "good"—or rather, "correct" conduct is essential to Wayfaring; and also that evil is a "non-entity"—as our word *naught-y*, German *untat*, and Sanskrit *a-sat* (as evil) imply, the *suppositio* being that *ens et bonum convertuntur*. I still maintain that your attitude, in wanting to have a "good" God, and therefore finding the problem of evil so difficult, is sentimental. But Wayfaring is one thing, and the Goal another. The Buddha and Meister Eckhart (among others) are in absolute agreement that the Goal is beyond good and evil; cf *Dhammapada* 412 (he is a monk, indeed, who has abandoned good and evil); and cf Dante, *Purg* 18.67–69, "those who in their reasoning went to the foundations beheld this interior freedom, therefore they left *moralita* to

the world"; and Rumi (Nicholson's translation, Ode VIII, "to the man of God, right and wrong are alike"). The problem of good and evil, in other words, pertains to the "active life" alone. In our correspondence I have ventured to assume we were discussing rather the truth itself than its application.

The supreme example of bringing good out of evil is that of *creatio ex nihilo*. Here the *nihil* is potentiality, possibility (always evil when contrasted with being in act) but also that without which no "act" could be, since the impossible never happens. One must bear in mind that all these technical terms have a double application; thus non-being as privation of being is evil, but a non-being that implied only freedom from the limitation of being in any mode is not an evil, and we find Meister Eckhart using the words "free as the God-head in its non-existence". The God of the traditional doctrines is the "Supreme Identity" of God and Godhead, Essence and Nature, Being and Non-being, Light and Darkness, *Sacerdotium* and *Regnum*. In creation and under the Sun these potentially distinguishable contraries interact, and a world composite from them is brought into being *ex principio conjuncto*. So (as explicit in Islam), Heaven and Hell are the reflections of the divine Mercy and Majesty, Love and Wrath, Spirit and Law. Both are the *same* "fire"; but as Boehme so often says, whether of Heaven or Hell depending upon ourselves, whether we are or are not "salamanders". We have not, then, known or loved God "as He is in Himself", but only an aspect of God, unless both in his light and darkness.

On the doctrine of sacrifice, I recommend Frithjof Schuon's discussion in *Études Traditionnelles*.

I am a "humanitarian" (an anti-vivisectionist, for example), but I do not feel a horror of animal or even human sacrifice; I recognize, of course, that it may not be "convenient" (becoming, right, proper) for *us* to practice either. At the same time, I very strongly suspect that this is not a matter of our superior virtue, and that all we have done is to secularize sacrifice (of animals in the laboratory; and of men in the financial-commercial state, in the factory, or on the battle field).

Regarding art, I do not myself see that Mayan art is devoid of sensuality. As for stylistic permanence or change: one must, of course, distinguish style from iconography; the latter can persist indefinitely, and even long after, its reasons are no longer

understood, the former always changes, so that even in what seem to be the most static cultures, works of art can be closely dated on stylistic grounds, if we know enough. There is no inherent necessity for iconographic change, because the forms may be correct; accordingly in a living tradition one expects Plato's "new songs, but not new kinds of music". It is our sensitive rather than our intellectual nature that demands novelties; for the intellect, originality is all that is required.

You still did not let me know whether you received from Marco Pallis his book, which he had sent you; I would like to be able to inform him, as he wanted to send you another copy if the first had gone astray.

Very sincerely,

PS: A few addenda of remarks that might have been included above: the Buddha's emphatic enunciation of a goal beyond good and evil does not, of course, prevent him from asserting with equal emphasis that there is an "ought to be done" and "an ought not to be done". We are responsible for what we do so long as we hold that we are the doers.

In gnosis, the fall of man is his knowledge of good and evil; his regeneration therefore, obviously, to a "primordial state" beyond good and evil, or "state of innocence", ie, of "harmlessness". What we call evil is as necessary as is what we call good to the perfection of the universe, which can only exist in terms of contrasts. The shadow as well as the highlight is necessary to the picture—so St Augustine (*Conf* VII. 13; *Erigena*, M. Bett, p 71; Rumi, *Legacy of Islam*, p 234).

Aldous Huxley, as above.  
Frithjof Schuon, see Appendix.  
Marco Pallis, as above, p 26

TO GERALD VANN, OP

February 26, 1947

Dear Gerald Vann, OP:

I agree with you (in current *Blackfriars*) that Huxley's



*philosophia perennis* is "transitional". I myself have collected much more, and I think much more impressive material. for the most part directly from Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, Pali and other sources.

But you say Christian "self-naughting" is in order to be reborn; but that the Eastern is not so. Who told you this about the East? Do you know the texts at first hand? If not, have you any right at all to make such statements?

As to *Tat Tvam Asi*, there is an extensive Indian literature by authoritative exegetes discussing at length the meaning of each of these words. Are you familiar with it?

A Roman Catholic friend of mine is devoting at least ten years to self preparation for writing on what is to be the attitude of Roman Catholics to Eastern religions as now better understood than formerly. For this purpose, in addition to the Latin and Greek he already knows, he has learned Sanskrit.

I consider it morally irresponsible to make statements (especially negative ones) about any "other" religion of which one does not have at least some firsthand knowledge. For example, to know anything seriously about Hinduism or Buddhism, you must have "searched their scriptures" as Christians do their *Bible*, not to mention the great commentaries in both cases.

Very sincerely,

Gerald Vann, OP, Blackfriars School, Laxton, England  
*Blackfriars*, a monthly review published by the Dominican Order (Order of Preachers) in England  
 Aldous Huxley, as above  
 Bernard Kelly, identified on p 20.

TO MISS ELIZABETH HEIMAN

December 30, 1938

Dear Miss Heimann:

It occurs to me to add that one must distinguish between *contraries* and mutually exclusive *opposites* without reciprocity. It is the former that are coincident on a level of reference above

them both (and which is represented on our level by the "mean"). It is only possible that can thus coincide; eg, being and non-being. Whereas the opposite of *possible*, viz, the *impossible*, has no existence anywhere (even in *divinis*), as is expressed in Christian doctrine by saying that "God cannot act against his own nature" (which is one of possibility). St Thomas himself observes in this connection that being and nonbeing are contradictory in themselves, but if we refer them to the act of the mind there is something positive in both cases (cf here *Udāna* 80: "there is a not-become", *atthi . . . abhūtam*); and the things are no longer mutually exclusive in intellect, because *one is the reason for knowing the other* (*Sum Theol* I-II, 64.3; cf 54,2 ad 1 and 35, 5 ad 2). It is precisely for this reason that "primative" languages (which proceed from a level of reference above dialectic) have roots and words that subsume contrary meanings: of which we have a survival in such words as "reward" which may imply a good or an evil, though our mentality tends more and more to restrict the meaning of such words—reward, for example, generally meaning a good. We call this kind of limitation "clear thinking", and refer the original ambivalence to a "pre-logical mentality". "Prior" to logic, perhaps, as principles are "prior" to their consequences (and as the Middle Ages understood *in principio*); but let us not forget that for India at least, logic (*nyaya*) is only one "point of view" (*darsana*), and by no means the most profound.

Very sincerely,

Miss Elizabeth Heimann, London, England

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

August 27, 1942

Sir,

I cannot agree with Captain Ludovici about everything. But I should like to say that he is absolutely right in saying that "values and truth are in different departments of knowledge." This holds good even in the field of empirical knowledge, where what we know factually about any phenomenon, social

or otherwise, is independent of the values, moral or aesthetic that we may associate with it.

Far more significant, however, is the principle that *values*, which always arrive in pairs (good and evil, long and short, etc) are always relative to the evaluator, and *truth*, considered absolutely, ie, *in divinis*, belong to two different worlds. In other words, God as He is in Himself, definable only by negations, and not as we conceive Him in our own likeness, *does not value*. At this point the line is drawn between religion (which takes account of values) and metaphysics (which, like Socrates *daimon*, "that vulgar fellow, cares for nothing but the truth"). But even the religions—all of them—recognize that there is a reality or truth transcending values; however temporally (but not eternally) important these values may be as dispositive to, or even pre-requisite to, grasp of the reality of that final truth.

It is of course, "dangerous" to publish such a doctrine, however true; it has happened more than once, both in Europe and in Asia, that men have argued (always, of course, heretically) that it does not matter what I do, right and wrong being only matters of preference. The catch lies, of course, in the words "I" and "preference"; since for so long as we hold that "*I am the doer*" and for as long as we entertain any *preferences* whatever, we cannot shake off the burden of responsibility. God has no preferences; and can have none, for if He had, that would mean that He had something to gain by action, which is excluded by hypothesis. It is only those who are no longer anyone and have no preferences, who have a right to look upon good and evil without approbation or disapproval.

I have said above that all scripture is agreed that there is "a beyond good and evil". This could be shown at great length by citation of chapter and verse from the scriptures of three millenia and many lands. To be brief, Meister Eckhart says of the *summum bonum* that "there neither good nor evil ever entered in". For St Thomas Aquinas, morality is, indeed essential to the active life, but only dispositive to the contemplative and higher life. In the same way, Buddhism is not an ethical doctrine essentially but only accidentally. The Buddha affirms very vigorously that there is an "Ought to be done" and an "Ought not to be done", but in the Parable of the Raft, points out that a man who has reached land at the end of his voyage does not



carry the ship about on his back but leaves it on the shore; and in the *Dhammapada* he defines a true Brahman, not the Brahman by birth, but one who has abandoned all attachment to good and evil. St Augustine says "God forbid that we should still use the Law as a means of arrival when we have arrived." And Meister Eckhart, in almost verbal agreement with the Buddha, says that "having gotten to the other side, I no longer need a ship." It is rather a pity that a doctrine of "beyond good and evil" should be so closely and exclusively connected with Nietzsche in our minds! Captain Ludovici's opponent hardly seems to realize that he is, in effect, defending a doctrine of salvation by works and merit, forgetting that we must be judged, at last, not by what we have done, but by what we are.

AKC

*The Dhammapada* is perhaps the most popular element of the Pali canon. It consists of 423 verses, forms part of the *Sutta-pitaka*, and dates from well before the beginning of the Christian era. Many translations are available.

TO HELEN CHAPIN

January 16, 1946

Dear Helen:

No time to answer at length at present as I have to prepare lectures for fixed dates. But about the unreality of evil: this follows from the accepted axiom *ens at bonum convertuntur*. That is also why our English word *naught-y* means *bad*, just as Sanskrit *a-sat*, "not-being", also is equivalent to "evil". It implies that all sins are *sins of omission*, not *acts*, but things *not-done* (Skr *atertam*), a point of view exactly preserved in German *untat*, crime. Or as in the case of darkness and light—darkness is not a *positive* principle, but only the *absence* of light: or as a lie is not a "false fact" but simply a *not-fact* or an *un-truth*. You'll soon get used to seeing this!

As to your possessions, of course, the best is [to] get them where they can be used and appreciated.

Congratulations on the prospect of going to the East!

Very sincerely,

Helen Chapin, Bryn Mawr College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

October 1942

Sir,

. . . I think Mr Massingham (in your issue Sept. 24, p. 187) does not quite see that this is a world of contrasts, and that there could not be any other kind of world. Hence a duality and opposition of "good and evil" in the world ("under the sun") is inevitable. To realize this does not make one a "dualist". A "radical correction of corrupt primary and secondary instincts by intellect" is, if I understand it rightly, just what Plato means when he speaks of "rectifying the modes of thought in our heads, which were distorted at our birth, by an understanding of the cosmic harmonies and motions, so that by an assimilation of the knower to the to-be-known in its primordial nature, and having come to be in this likeness, we may attain at last to that 'life's best' that has been appointed by the Gods to man for this time being and hereafter" (*Timmaeus* 90 D, cf 47 C), and in many other contexts in which he speaks of "self-rule" as the government of the worse part in us (the impulses and instincts) by the best part (reason).

We must bear in mind, however, that "intellect" like "reason" is one of the many terms of which the meaning has been lessened and degraded for us. In the traditional theology, "Intellect" is equated with "spirit" and is not at all what we may for convenience call "mentality" or what we mean by "reason", something a long way under Plato's Logos! All tradition assumes a duality of "mind", which is both human and divine; correction is of the former by the latter, and it is to this rectification that the word *metanoia*, which we render by "repentance", but which is really "change of mind", refers. I assert that this is the "true traditional line".

AKC

TO PROFESSOR MEYER SCHAPIRO

October 19, 1932

Dear Professor Schapiro:

Many thanks for your letter. My understanding would be that as *adequatio* is in epistemology, so *consonnantia* is in aesthetic; these terms corresponding to *sārūpya* (conformity) and *sādrśya* ("con-visibility"). It seems to me that Scholastic and Oriental theory are in complete agreement that complete knowledge and being are one and the same: this "being" (essence) representing the condition of *reconciliation* between the objective as it is in itself and the subjective as it is in us, neither of these possessing a reality of the same order as that of their common principle. This applies equally to knowledge (truth) and art (beauty): *ratio pulchri est quadam consonantia diversorum*. Whether or not this is the doctrine actually taught is, of course, a matter for investigation: apart from that, I feel it to be true.

Now as to "constatation": I cannot understand the idea of a "good" world picture, or any world picture that is not made up of contrasts. Put otherwise, how can the primal pulse of being be thought of otherwise than as simultaneous spiration and despiration, extroversion and introversion, etc? (Expressed in religious terms, "He makes his sun to shine alike upon the just and the unjust": or Indian, "The Lord accepts neither the good nor the evil works of any man.") This is from the point of view of the absolute Self (not empirical Ego); good and evil, wisdom and folly, are equally acceptable, there being no distinction between necessity and tolerability. On the other hand, from the standpoint of the empirical Ego situated at a given here and now, there will be an inevitable bias in favour of good or evil, introversion or controversion, etc. What is most important is not so much *what* the position is as whether the individual is conscious of his position. Any judgement of good or evil is to be sure a matter of taste, ie, the healthy individual will always approve of what corresponds to his own nature. Whether or not "naturalistic" is a correct characterisation of a style in question is another matter: by "naturalistic" I do not so much mean "photographic" in a bad sense (incidentally, I have myself practised photography as an "art."), as "extrovert" and "superficial" (in the etymological rather than the derogatory



sense of the word). And if in the said period aesthetic has been "idealistic" this seems to me to represent a sentimentality, parallel to that of the "Pollyanna religious" which dispose of matter and evil by asserting the only reality of the soul and [the] good.

I may add that in Indian logic, *sādrśya* is defined as *identity in difference*—see Das Gupta, *Hist of Indian Philosophy*. I, 318— and *sārūpya* in epistemology as *sameness* (ibid, 154). It seems to me that these two terms, as also *consonantia* and *adequatio* exclude both "objectivity" and "subjectivity".

I have not yet read through *Culture and Crisis*, but of course agree with much that is there said. Still, the only way in which I have *complete* faith is that of the regeneration or perfecting of the individual.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Meyer Schapiro, Columbia University, New York, New York, USA.

TO MISS JENKS

November 18, 1945

Dear Miss Jenks:

About negation: in the first place, as Sankaracarya says, "Whenever we deny something unreal, it is with reference to something real" (examples: independence; im-mortality; apathetic, ie, not pathetic; im-passible; in-effable—all of which are positive concepts, and unlike the denials of value implied by such other expressions as un-stable, un-worthy, un-clean, where it is a matter of real "privation": one must not be deceived by the merely grammatical likeness of the terms). On the general subject of "significant negation" see Wilbur Urban, *The Intelligible World* (N Y, 1929, pp 452–53). If God is ineffable, in-finite, these denials that anything ultimately true can be *said* of Him, and of spatial limitation, are not derogatory! Hence there has always been recognized in Christian exegesis, as well as elsewhere, the necessity for the two *viae*, of

"affirmation" and of "denial", to be followed in sequential order.

From the point of view of the active life, our ex-istence is important; but from that of the contemplative life (which I need hardly say is, from the Christian and whole traditional point of view the ultimately superior life, though both are necessary and right, here and now), in the words of Christ, "Let him *deny* himself" (Mark VIII 13, 14; cf *The Cloud of Unknowing*, chap 44: "All men have matter of sorrow: but most specially he feeleth matter of sorrow that wotteth and feeleth that he is. . . . This sorrow, when it is had, cleaneth the soul, not only of sin, but also of pain. . . and . . . able to receive that joy, the which reeveth from a man all witting and feeling of his being")—that he may *affirm* Me, for whosoever shall deny Me. . . ." (Matthew X, 34–39). St Paul had denied himself, and affirmed Christ, when he said "I live, *not I, but Christ in me.*" That is what a Hindu means by "liberation" (*moksa*). In this connection, by the way, you asked me about catharsis (purgation); I would say that the Hindu concept, which is expressed in terms of cleansing or washing (cf, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me *clean*") corresponds much more to Plato's than to Aristotle's *katharsis*; Plato's definition being "separation of the soul from the body as far as that is possible"; and Aristotle's, I confess, a little dubious to me for it seems to imply not much more than "having a good cry, and feeling better".

Regarding Buddhism (Hinayana), negative propositions predominate because the doctrine is essentially monastic, whereas Hinduism embraces both the "ordinary" and the "extraordinary" norms of existence, and is both affirmative and negative accordingly. Thus (early) Buddhism is not strictly comparable in all respects either to the Hinduism from which it developed, or with Christianity; that is, not strictly comparable in total scope. Since it considers *only* man's *last* end.

For negation in Western religious tradition (disregarding the similar formulae in Islam and Hinduism just now) cf: "My kingdom is *not* of this world"; "and if any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (I Cor VIII, 2); "Thou of whom no words can tell, whom only silence can declare" (*Hermetica* I, 17); "Knowest thou of Him anything? He is no such thing" (Eckhart); God himself does not know what He is, because He is not any what"



(Erigena); "If anyone in seeing God conceives something in his mind, this is not God, but one of God's effects" (Aquinas, *Sum Theol* III. 92. 1 ad 4); "To know God as He is, we must be absolutely free from knowing" (Eckhart, of Cusa's *Docta ignorantia*, a good illustration of the ambiguity of symbols, "ignorance" bearing here its "good" sense). Much more of the like could be cited from Dante. I do not understand how anyone can claim to be a Christian who resents the idea of a kingdom *not* of this world; and it seems to me "heretical" (ie, "not knowing what is true, but thinking what one likes to think", ie, wishfully) to reject the Christian tradition of the *via negativa*, and at the same time for a Christian disingeniously to cavil at the use of the same method (*metodos*, procedure) in Islam and other religions. Finally, the greater part of the criticisms that Christians commonly make of other religions are based on imperfect, ie, second hand knowledge, and to a certain extent therefore are intellectually dishonest. In fact, they know Christianity positively, and the others only "negatively". Under these circumstances, silence would be "golden". How many European scholars are reasonably equipped—I refer to a knowledge of, *at least*, either Arabic, Sanskrit, or Chinese—or failing that, then at least long and intimate personal association with the followers of other religions. Cf . . . Sir George Birdwood in *Sva* (Oxford, 1919, pp 17–23), ending: "Henceforth I knew that there were not many gods of human worship, but one God only, who was polyonymous and polymorphous, being figured and named according to the variety of the outward conditions of things, ever changing and everywhere different, and unceasingly modifying our inward conceptions of them"—reminding one of Philo's words: "But, if He exists whom with one accord all Greeks and Barbarians acknowledge together. . . ." (*Spec* II, 165) thus ascribing monotheism to all pagans as Goodenough comments. I might add, compare the history of religious persecution in Europe with the almost total absense . . . [there-of] in India where there was, of course, plenty of religious controversy.

In an orthodox Indian family, it can quite easily happen that different members of the family may choose "different Gods", ie, different aspects of God, differently named, and no one thinks this strange. I . . . think it a state of spiritual infancy to



claim exclusive truth for one's own religion (which one has usually inherited willy-nilly, being "born" a little Catholic, a little Protestant, a little Jew, or a little Muslim); one has only the right to feel that "my religion is true", not that yours is untrue. All this does not . . . exclude the possibility of heresy, which may arise in any religious context; the reasonable thing is for those who are interested in the truth . . . to discuss the truth of particular doctrines, about which agreement can . . . generally be reached. I . . . hardly ever set out to explain a particular doctrine from the point of view of one tradition only, but cite authorities from many ages and sources; by "particular doctrines", I mean, of course, such as that of the "one essence and two natures, and many others about which there is, in fact, universal agreement.

Very sincerely,

Miss Jenks is not further identified.

TO ERIC GILL

March 6, 1934

Dear Eric:

I was glad to have yours of February 16. I hear from Carey that there is still a possibility of your coming over; if so, I hope you will manage to spend a week with us.

Yes, I think the ideas of "personality" and "void" can be reconciled—somewhat as the affirmative and negative theology can be. One might begin with "no one can be my disciple who does not hate *animam suam*", and St Paul's "I live, yet not I, but Christ in me", and "the word of God . . . extends to the sundering of soul and spirit", going on to the Thomist "memory belongs to the sensitive faculty" and "only the intellectual virtues (ie, "spiritual") survive", and to *The Cloud of Unknowing*: "the greatest sorrow that a man can feel is to realise that he *is*", and Eckhart's "the soul must put herself to death" as "the kingdom of God is for none but the thoroughly dead", and other such passages showing that the Christian should not be unduly alarmed at the use of the negative

phraseologies in, eg, Buddhism. Then one could take Dionysius' Divine Darkness—Dark by "excess of Light", and his and the Thomist non-being, and the idea of God as nothing, *nihil*, or no one thing or aggregate of things, "void of thingness", as Erigena states, "God himself does not know *what* He is, because He is not any 'what'".

From the other side one could take the negative terms and demonstrate their unlimited *content* (which can be illustrated by 0 equals 1 minus 1; 2 minus 2, etc, the plus and minus numbers corresponding to all the "pairs of opposites" which determine our human experience.

The "individualism" of the current philosophy of life is equally un-Christian and un-Buddhist—to cling to the "I" in this sense is to cling to a bad master and to forget *the* Master in whose service alone there is perfect *freedom*. Every degree of freedom is a degree of emancipation from the psycho-physical ego, a degree in the realisation of the spiritual *person*—who, the more it approaches the likeness of God (by *ablatio omnis alteritatis*, Cusa) can best be described, like Him, only in negative terms!

Much love from Ananda,

Eric Gill, identified on p 82; see also the opening lines of the Introduction. Carey, i.e. Graham Carey; see p 43

TO MR F. A. CUTTAT

April 8, 1943

My dear M. Cuttat:

It was a pleasure to receive your very kind letter, and I am happy to know that my papers reached, and interested, you.

As to *tamas*: I am glad that we are agreed that *prakriti* cannot be equated with *rajas*. For the rest, I think you are right in saying that the *gunas* must be analogically represented in *divinis*, and that by inversion *tamas* would be the highest. It should be, in fact, the "Divine Darkness" of Dionysius, and the object of the *contemplatio in caligine*. We have an exact parallel in "non-being", which is "evil" as that which has not yet come

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Feb. 12

Dear Eric,

Thanks for yours. I'm grateful for your  
response. I would like to mention my note  
in N.E. Weekly was part of a private letter to  
the Editor and was printed by him without  
permission. I mention this because it  
is expressed in part a little too conversationally.

I've spoken of transubstantiation further in  
"Le symbolisme de l'épée" in *Etudes Traditionnelles*  
for Jan 1938.

You are quite right in emphasizing that we cannot  
have a better art, by making art an object. People  
have the kind of art that they have earned by being  
what they are. So we must first rectify ourselves  
before we can have an upright art. I use these  
particular words because I am just now  
working on the "inverted tree" (a quite word under  
formula which seems to stand for the Copying  
man). What I am always lamenting is  
that I cannot get more done. There is so much  
to be done.

affectionately

Anandak Coomaraswamy



into being, but superior to being itself when it means that which is not limited by any affirmative definition. All values are thus reversible, and from this point of view the celestial powers of darkness are superior to the cosmic powers of light. The Janitors of the empyrean *arcanum* are "demons" to us, because they keep us out; but good from the standpoint of the deity *ab intra*, to whom none may enter unless qualified.

Your mention of Scorpio (who was originally a celestial Janitor) is curious, because I am just now working at the iconography of Sagittarius (another Janitor) in which that of the Scorpion-man is also involved. These types were originally the guardians of the door (*Janua Coeli*) of the abode of Anu (= *Varuna*) and of *Tammuz* (= *Soma*) that grew in Anu's "garden". The Tree was robbed by the Firebird (*Aquila*) in order that "we" might have life, and ultimately eternal life. Scorpio is one of the equivalents of the Cherubim who "keep the way of the Tree of Life" in Genesis, where the "flaming sword that turns every way" is an example of the widely diffused type of the "active door". The guardians are evil from our present point of view, who are shut out, but not more absolutely so that St Peter who keeps out those who have no right to enter. It is in the same sense that pearls are to be withheld from swine. (This reminds me of a definition I have heard of universal compulsory education: "false pearls cast before real swine"!.) Hence I think you are right in saying that *tamas* can be associated with *ananda* as its locus (*loka*); indeed, the analogy serves to explain *why* it is that human intercourse (which reflects the "act of fecundation latent in eternity") "ought" to take place only in the dark (cf *S B VI.1, 5, 19*), and to explain the covering up of the Queen and the Stallion in the *Asvamedha*. Of these sufficient metaphysical reasons our modern "decency" is only a weak representative; "propriety" would be a better word, if understood in its etymological sense, and in the original sense of "decorous".

I am glad to have news of M. Guénon. I have sent him various publications during the last two years, but do not know if they reached him. I hear of him indirectly through Marco Pallis. I shall be most grateful if you can, as you suggest, send me a typescript of his new book on the quantitative and qualitative; too often people forget that these are incompatibles!

I have just been reading Demetra Vaka's *Haremlik* (Hought-

on Mifflin, New York, 1909); you should get hold of it if possible (it may be in print, and anyhow should be easily obtainable), for it is excellent and poignant, and indeed throws a grim light on what we call our "civilisation".

With kindest regards,

Very sincerely,

F. A. Cattat was a Swiss diplomat and at the time of this exchange was posted to the Swiss Legation at Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The three *gunas*: *sattvas*, *rajas* and *tamas*, in Hindu cosmology, are qualities or tendencies which exist in perfect equilibrium in the primordial substance, *prakriti* (materia prima, to adapt a Scholastic term) but are variously combined in every manifested object; *sattvas* = the ascending tendency, *rajas* = the expansive tendency, and *tamas* = the downward and compressive tendency. See René Guénon, *Man and His becoming According to the Vedanta*, chap. iv.

René Guénon, Cairo, Egypt; communications between Dr Coomaraswamy and Guénon were interrupted during the II World War. His *The Reign of Quantity and the Times* was circulated in typescript form before formal publication. See Bibliography.

Demetra Vaka, *Haremlik*, Some Pages from the Life of Turkish Women, Boston, 1906.

ANONYMOUS

Date uncertain

Dear M:

All religions are agreed that the goal lies beyond logical thought, beyond good and evil, beyond consciousness, and all pairs of contraries. The Way is another matter; on the Way one must use means; notably means of thought and discrimination, valuation, etc. In other words, use the ordinary instruments of thought, ie, symbols, verbal or visual. The alternative would be not to speak of God at all, but only of what we call facts or sensations. The names of God vary according to the aspect or activity considered, eg, Creator, Father, Light.

All religions assume one essence and two natures, of which there is the Supreme Identity, without composition. The natures are personal and impersonal, immortal and mortal, infinite and finite, justice and love, royal and sacerdotal, transcendent and immanent, etc.



Such are our images; by their means one advances on the Way. Iconoclasm presupposes iconography; it is mere vanity for those who have not used their images *until* they have no more use for them. That involves total self-naughting; and few have seen God without image. We have, therefore, the *via affirmativa*, or taught way; and the *via negativa*, or untaught way in which he is grasped without attributes; and these distinctions are common to all theologies. The last step, no doubt, is one of *docta ignorantia*; that does not mean that there is any merit in the *indocta ignorantia* of those who refuse to step at all.

In your paragraph 2, what you refer to is not “the” mystical experience, but the stages of it. The highest level of reference we can grasp from below seems to us like the goal; but it is only a temporary goal; the ladder is very long and has many rungs (stepping stones of our dead selves). Yet the Way is not *infinitely* long; it is only incalculably long; and at the same time so short that it can be crossed in a second, if all is ripe for that. Yes, any “mystical” experience remains for ever afterward a “pointer”.

It is absurd to ask simultaneously for knowledge and for the method of obtaining it (Aristotle, *Met* II.2.3). Try never questioning the truth of scripture and myth, etc—regard it as your business simply to understand it. In that way you will find that you are getting somewhere, and before you know it, actually you will have some degree of knowledge. You will not reject the means until you know all that there is to be known. That is the *sine qua non* for “unknowing”.

The best European teacher is Meister Eckhart; supremely exact.

Buddhism and Hinduism (essentially the same) are not easy to understand from published accounts by rationalist scholars untrained in theology. Both require use of the texts. However, there are no doctrines peculiar to any one body of doctrine; any real “matter of faith” can be supported from many different sources.

An “evolution” in metaphysics is impossible; but one can learn not to think for oneself (ie, as one likes). In mathematics one does not have private opinions about the sum of two and two; and so in this other universal science.

Further, on why worship *must* be *symbolic*—figurative—see St Thomas Aquinas, *Sum Theol* I-II. 101.2. The use of symbols



pertains to the *via affirmativa*, and includes all names given to God. They can only be dispensed with gradually in the *via negativa* leading to direct vision *without means*. Those who try to dispense with symbols before they have attained to the beatific vision are premature iconoclasts.

Symbols are, strictly speaking, *supports of contemplation*. This is why St Clement says, "the parabolic style of scripture is of the greatest antiquity", and why Dante says "and therefore doth the scripture condescend to your capacity, assigning foot and hand to God, with other meaning" (*Paradiso* IV, 43.f.). In the animal life (empirical life guided by estimative knowledge) we value things as they are in themselves; otherwise, for what they are in intellect, "taken out of their sense" as Eckhart puts it. Life is empirical to the extent that we are unable to refer our actions to their principles. When we do so, however, then the things are the "symbols" of the principles. A life with communication based entirely on signs, and entirely lacking in symbolism, is a purely animal life. A "Comprehensor" may to all appearances do the same thing as other men, but for him *sub specie aeternitatis*. Symbolism bridges the schism of sacred and profane and that is why meaningless art is fetishisms or idolatry. On a somewhat lower plane, we cannot talk higher mathematics without using symbols. One cannot reduce everything to a vocabulary of 500 words. To know without images is to be in the state where *contemplatio* supercedes *consideratio*, for as Aristotle says "the soul never thinks without a mental picture . . . even when one thinks speculatively, one must have some mental picture of which to think" (*De anima* III, 7.8). This state of knowing without images is the last stage of *yoga*, *samadhi*, which etymologically = synthesis.

Sincerely,

TO E.R. GOODENOUGH

Date uncertain

Dear Professor Goodenough:

. . . I think that we have to be very careful not to forget that the symbol of any immaterial thing is necessarily in itself

concrete, and not to fall into such blunders as Maine's in his introduction to Marcus Aurelius. We have all the same problems in India, where the theology has been so hopelessly confused by scholars who take terms such as *vayu* ("wind", but really "Gale of the Spirit") literally and not as a referent. Philo himself is often warning us against such errors (eg, *Conf* 133), against which all the "laws of allegory" militate, while in India we have equal ridicule for those who "mistake the finger for that at which it points."

I have of course, been able to make only a partial concordance of Philo's ideas for myself, but it is fairly thorough for my purposes; I am using him largely in a study and comparison of Greek with Sanskrit *Akasa* in the respective texts. One would be hard put to it really to distinguish Philo's forms of thought from Indian.

Sincerely,

E. R. Goodenough, professor of the history of religion at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

TO GRAHAM CAREY

November 25, 1943

Dear Graham:

What the secular mind does is to assert that we (symbolists) are reading meaning into things that originally had none: our assertion is that they are reading out the meanings. The proof of our contention lies in the *perfection, consistency and universality* of the pattern in which these meanings are united.

Always most cordially,

Graham Carey, identified on p 43.  
This was a handwritten postcard.

TO ROBERT ULICH

July 10, 1942

Dear Professor Ulich:

I am delighted to have your book—it is curious that I have just been reading Jaeger's *Paideia* which states the aristocratic cultural ideal. I suppose I am nearest to what you would call a Symbolist (p 311) and certainly agree that this position is in no way incompatible with radical scientific thinking, though it surprises me that you call this attitude "widespread in our times" since I should have supposed that to think in symbols had gradually become the rarest accomplishment. I do not think I have ever felt the conflict of reason and belief, and in a way I cannot understand what such a conflict could mean, since it seems to me that all facts are projections of timeless forms on a time-space surface. So too . . . miracles . . . are things that can be done even today by those who know how, and therefore present no intrinsic problem; on the other hand, the question whether such and such a miracle was actually performed on a given occasion seems to me unimportant compared with the transparent *meanings* of miracles (this takes us back to symbolism).

If ever you make a second edition, I hope you will take account of the Orient and the primacy of pure metaphysics as emphasized by Guénon.

One further remark about symbolism. I was delighted recently to find out that Aristotle points out that *mimesis* naturally involves *methexis*.

I should have seen this for myself. It is so obvious when pointed out. A pity Levy-Bruhl with his exaggerated notions about the illogical character of "mystic participation" had not realized it; he might have written less.

Symbolism presupposes real analogies on different levels of reference. Hence also symbols and their references are inseparable—the symbols are the language of revelation, not a language to be constructed at will in the sense of "let this be understood to refer to this" (that may be signification, but not symbolism). The symbol is not so much of X, as it is X in a likeness—ic, in another nature. I would say that symbols are technical language of the *philosophia perennis*. Symbols (eg,



light) are used in essentially the same way at all times and all over the world: hence this is a *language of common understanding*. *Le symbolisme qui cherche* is always individual and therefore of little use for purposes of communication: *le symbolisme qui sait* is another matter, and moreover of enormous weight because it is only in terms of this symbolism that the forms of traditional art acquire *meaning* for us. Shape and content of a symbol are inseparable (cf p 95).

I am afraid my booklet is hard reading. I was very much pleased by your appreciation therefore. I have recently completed articles on "Recollection, Indian and Platonic" and "The Only Transmigrant" (inseparable themes; for it is only a timeless omnipresence that can make the idea of omniscience intelligible).

With very kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

PS: p 283—How often I have also said that "freedom to starve is not freedom"! I find Kierkegaard almost repulsive—always whining. So also Paul Claudel and Rainer M. Rilke mean nothing to me!

PS: Your book suggests many things. Obviously and above all, education for what, toward what: I cannot think of any final goal or *summum bonum* that does not include absolute freedom and power to be *as* and *when* we will, to know all that can be known and also the unknowable. That is only conceivable by an identification of our being not with this outer man so and so, but with the immanent deity, the inner man (*daimon*). No psychology, then, seems so much to elucidate our inner conflict, actual limitation and desired liberty, as the Platonic and Indian conception of a Universal Self that is our real Self, living side by side with the empirical Ego which is really a process rather than an identity. Education must be twofold, on the one hand to enable the outer man to do the tasks for which he is naturally fitted, and second to enable us to recognize in the inner man our real Self, and in the outer man no more than a valuable tool adapted to contingent ends. In this sense I understand *gnothi seauton* and its Oriental equivalents as the true direction of higher education. If we also understand the traditional symbolisms, all the activities of the outer man can be

made the support of this understanding.

PS: I doubt if you are quite right in saying that Plato despised manual labor; what he deprecates is *mere* manual labour, anything that serves the needs of the body only, and not of the body and the soul at the same time. *Charmides* 163B seems to endorse Hesiod's "work is no reproach". Other refs: *Euthydemus* 301D, *Republic* 401C, 406C, *Protagoras* 355B and his whole conception of vocation, *to eauton prattein* being each man's Way to perfect himself. Cf also original senses of *sophia* and *episteme*—skill, again a connection of ideas well developed in India where *kausalya* = skill, primarily technical, secondly moral and intellectual.

Ulich, Heinrich Gottlob Robert, at the time of this letter was professor and chairman of the department of education at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. As the book that occasioned this AKC letter is not named in the letter, we can only conjecture that it may have been Dr Ulich's *Fundamentals of Democratic Education*, which was published in 1940.

Rene Guénon, Cairo, Egypt.

Levy-Bruhl, Lucien (d 1939), early social anthropologist and philosopher, wrote widely on the behavior and thinking of primitive man, though without ever having lived or worked among such people.

'Recollection, Indian and Platonic' and 'On the One and Only Transmigrant', published as supplement 3 to the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol LXIV, no 2, 1944.

TO GRAHAM CAREY

July 29, 1944

Dear Graham:

*Intellige Deum et scite quod vis* seems to me absolutely O. K.

I have been reading W. M. Urban's *Language and Reality* (Allen and Unwin, 1939) with great pleasure and profit.

Answers on the color symbolism are not quite so easy. On the whole, I agree with your remarks: however, I suggest that *Essentia* is only *apparently* modified by matter, in the same way that space is only *apparently* modified by its enclosure in say a glass jar. We see this when the jar is broken: in the same way with *Essentia* when the material conditions determining *Esse* are dissolved. So I would say "God" created the Universe by

revealing whatever of Himself is susceptible of manifestation." Over and above this remains all that is not susceptible of manifestation. I do not like the expression "passing *Esse* through *Posse*."

As you say, Pure Being = White } both invisible  
Pure Potency = Black }

Between these two lies the colored world of action. These are the three "gunas" of Indian cosmology; cf *Paradiso* 29, 31–36. These are the "3 worlds" of tradition—all under the Sun and other than the Otherworld.

Blue, black and green are more or less the same traditionally; the implication of emptiness is right, but this is also potentiality, since emptiness demands fulfilment; the four castes and four quarters are white, red, yellow and black. The "higher lights" (as you imply) are representative of higher values.

Purple rightly associated with black; purple connected with royalty (also mourning) as black is with death. Prism: so "life stains the white radiance of eternity."

I hardly think the light returns to God by the rotation of the wheel, but rather when it is *stopped*, ie, when the circumference is reduced to the centre; then the centrifugal ray by which the circumference was so to say pushed out, returns on itself to its source. As Heracleitus says, "the way up and the way down are the same", the wheel continues to turn until the circumference is contracted to the motionless centre ("rolling up" of time and space). I wonder if you are not using *Esse* (existence) where you mean *Essentia* (being), perhaps. *Essentia* apparently modified by matter = *Esse*.

Best regards,

Graham Carey, Catholic author, Fairhaven, Vermont, USA.

TO GRAHAM CAREY

December 8, 1943

Dear Graham Carey:

I've been expecting to hear from you about Newport, as I'd like to come if it's not too arduous.



I just discovered why a man carries his bride across the threshold of the new home: briefly, the new home is assimilated to Paradise, the *husband acts as psychopomp*, and there is the prayer addressed to the joints of the door of the "divine" house, "Do not hurt her". One has to *fly* through the *Janua Coeli* and the nearest to that in formal symbolism is to be *carried* through—you can easily see why it is "unlucky" if the husband stumbles.

kindest regards,

Graham Carey, as above.

TO GRAHAM CAREY

July 20, 1944

Dear Graham:

I can subscribe to *Revelationes multas, incarnatio unica* which seems to correspond to our doctrine of the Eternal Avatar.

The *omne falsum* . . . seems a little questionable: falsity, like darkness, arises wherever the truth, spirit, light is absent. At the same time, there could not be a world without its contraries (true and false, good and evil, etc), and in the relative sense each presupposes the other. God is not "good" in this relative sense, but as transcending all values.

Very sincerely,

Graham Carey, as above.

TO GRAHAM CAREY

June 14, 1944

Dear Carey:

From the Indian point of view (dark) blue and black are equivalent. The three: blue, red and white correspond to the tamasic, rajasic and sattvic qualities. Indian images can be

classified in these terms as ferocious, royal, and mild or spiritual in aspect. Now while knowledge and love are the characteristic *qualities* of Cherubim and Seraphim, their primary functions are defensive . . . and looked at purely from an Indian point of view one would think of the colors blue and red as corresponding to this militant function. God himself would be white—or what is essentially golden, gold being the regular symbol of light, life and immortality.

From within the Christian-Hebrew tradition one would recall that Seraphs are “fiery serpents” and connect the red with this as well as with their characteristic *ardor*.

I am just now writing the part of “Early Iconography of Sagittarius” which deals with Cherubs and Seraphs. They are both militant and fierce types that “keep the way of the Tree of Life”—the nearest to God (under the Thrones) in knowledge and love because they are his “bodyguard”, a sort of “King’s own” regiment, an elite of the angels. I am not quite able to explain the blue for the Christian-Hebrew sources. Possibly the blue, as for the Virgin, considered in her aspect as Sophia.

Very sincerely,

PS: From my outlook, blue or black is appropriate to the Virgin in view of her identity with the Earth (goddess), the Mother★—of which I was reminded the other day when seeing the film *The Song of Bernadette* (which is very fine and you *must* see). This is the accepted explanation of the *Vierges noires* (cf Durand Lefebvre, *Étude sur l’origine des Vierges noires*, Paris, 1937), and Benjamin Rowland’s article on the “Nativity in the Grotto”, *Bulletin of the Fogg Museum of Art*, VII, 1939, esp p 63.

★ Given the nominalist and reductionist attitudes of mind that modern education instills, almost willy-nilly, in those whom it forms, it may be worth pointing out that this identification of which AKC writes in no way excludes other symbolic identifications involving the Virgin—no more than an actress is inhibited from *appearing* simultaneously in more than one film. Preeminently *Theotokos*, God-Bearer and Mother of God, she is also, according to perspective and context: a young Jewish girl in whom virtue was perfect, Co-Redemptrix, the divine *Sophia*, the *shakti* of Christ, *imago Dei* and the primordial purity and beauty of the human soul *antelapsus, janua coeli*, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, *materia prima* (cf Genesis i, 2), etc.

Graham Carey, as above.

On Black Virgins, see: *L'Énigme des Vierges noires*, Jacques Huynen, Éditions Robert Laffont, Paris, 1972; *Étude sur l'origine des Vierges noires*, Marie Durand-Lefebvre, Librairie Renouard, Paris, 1937; and *Vierges romanes*, A Guerne, Zodiaque, Paris, 1973.

Unfortunately, 'The Early Iconography of Sagittarius' was still incomplete at the time of Dr Coomaraswamy's death and has not been published. It may be noted, however, that the arrow gives the sense of the figure of Sagittarius, which is that of fully unified man: animal, human and divine, the arrow indicating the latter—*Chosen Arrow* was a name given to Christ in early Christianity.

TO CARL SCHUSTER

December 9, 1931

Dear Dr Schuster:

Both your papers interest me greatly. You are doing invaluable and necessary work in recognizing the universal symbolic motifs scattered so abundantly through Chinese peasant art. On chess in its "cosmic" aspect, cf references given by Otto Rank in *Art and Artist*. But is not your game rather "race game" than chess proper? For similar games in Ceylon, cf Parker, *Ancient Ceylon*. Shoulder flames are, I am sure, to be distinguished from polycephalic representations, inasmuch as the flames do not imply other "persons" of the person represented. On *tejas*, see Vogel, "Het Sanskrit Woord *tejas*", *Med Kon Akad Wetenschappen*, Afd Lettarkund, 1930; cf my "Early Indian Iconography, I: Indra" in *Eastern Art*. Shoulder flames are represented in various divine and royal effigies on Kusan coins, see *Boston Museum Catalog of Indian Coins*, Greek and Indo-Scythian, eg, pl xxviii, 26. The shoulder flames of a Buddha occur typically in connection with the "double miracle" (a solar manifestation) in which there are manifested streams of water from the feet and flames from the shoulders, cf Weldschmidt in *Oz N F*, VI, p 4, etc, and Foucher, *L'Art greco-bouddhique*. For further data on shoulder flames I am sending you our *Museum Bulletin* for August 1927, see pp 53, 54. But I really don't think the problem is closely related to your present enquiry; and it is just as important to exclude what is irrelevant to a specific problem as to include what is relevant.

On the Sunbird in Indian symbolism, it would be easy to



write a book. Hentze has made sound remarks on the Sunbird in Chinese art; see my "Note on the Asvamedha", *Archiv Orientalni*, VII, of which I send you a reprint, see p 316, note 1. The eagle, phoenix, *garuda*, *hamsa*, or by whatever name we use, is two headed in the same sense as any other Janus type. I presume the Sunbird may also be represented as the bearer-across (the "sea") of other beings, ie, like Pegasus, as the vehicle of salvation, and in this case perhaps any additional heads in general (and this includes the special case of the Janus types) represent the persons of the Deity (we have representations of the Christian Trinity of this type). On sunbirds and other solar motifs, cf also Roes, *Greek Geometric Art, its Symbolism and Origin* (Oxford).

I am sorry I cannot do more in a letter. I hope you will be here again some day.

With very kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

PS: Sunbirds hovering above the Tree of Life are of course abundant in Assyrian art.

Carl Schuster, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

Otto Rank. *Art and Artist*.

'Early Indian Iconography, I; Indra', *Eastern Art*, I, Philadelphia, 1928.

*L'Art greco-bouddhique*, Foucher.

'A Note on the *Asvamedha*', *Archiv Orientalni*, VII, Prague, 1936.

*Ancient Ceylon*, H. Parker, London, 1909.

TO JOSEPH SHIPLEY

July 12, 1945

Dear Shipley:

Very many thanks for your fascinating volume; as you know, I am deeply interested in word-meanings; and it frequently happens that the meaning I need to use is "obsolete" or "rare" rather than the current sense.

I feel most of the pieces are too short. A good piece might have been done, *s v*, *wit*, on the distinction between *gnoscere*

from *vitere*, knowledge from wisdom, with other parallels. *S v element*: from far back, both in Greece and India, the elements are five, the *quinta essentia* being ether (this is a subject I have done considerable research on); the four are only the 'material' elements, the latter corresponds to "soul". *S v fairy, fata*, is surely plural, fates. *S v angel*, it would have been useful to point out that Satan is still an "angel", and our use of "angelic" to mean "sweet and good" is rather insufficiently based. Some of the unfallen angels are pretty fierce. Also I would have mentioned that "angels" correspond to the gods (other than God) of pagan mythologies. (Philo equates "angel" with Greek *here* and *daimon*.) *S v idiot*, virtually "one who thinks for himself". *S v nest*, the Skr is *nida*; there is no *nidd*—probably the second *d* is a misprint for *a*.

Also *fakir* (lit, "poor", designation of Islamic ascetics), no connection with "faker" (as you say). You have *fakvir*; it is, however, wrong to add *v* after the *g*. . . .

Very sincerely,

Joseph Shipley, *Dictionary of Word Origins*, New York, 1945. A copy was inscribed to AKC, 'who knows the ways of words.'

TO PROFESSOR ALFRED O. MENDEL

Date uncertain

Dear Dr Mendel:

Right and left, of course, play an important part in all traditional philosophies. For right and left as male and female perhaps the most convenient references are *Satapatha Brahmana* X.5.2.8–12 (see in *SBE* XLIII, p 371) and *Maitri Upanishad* VII.11 (see Hume, *Thirteen Principle Upanishads*, Oxford, 1934, p 457). These two, of course, correspond to Sun and Moon, and also to *Manas* and *Vac*.

You might also, for the past as maternal and the future as paternal, look at *Sankhayana Aranyaka* VII.15 (and other triads listed in same context) in the version of A. B. Keith, London, 1908, p 47.

With slight modification of your own words, I would

agree—mother: past, self (ego, psyche); father: future, Self, spirit, and “Common Man” (not “fellow man”, but the “Man” in all men and women, which was the original meaning of this expression, now perverted to refer to the “man in the street”).

It is hermeneutically (not etymologically) interesting that “left” has the ambiguous sense of (1) opposite to right and (2) meaning “left *behind*”; similarly, “right”, (1) not left in position and (2) upright. Hence I would *not* agree to equating “tradition” with the past; properly speaking, “tradition” represents what is *timeless*, stable, correct (con + right), while the feminine is the *changeable* factor; as, indeed, we see in the use of right and left in their political senses.\* Tradition is no more past than future; it represents the *philosophia perennis*, not to be confused with fashions and habits which were *new* in their day, but are now *passé*.

Sincerely,

\*Here actually you get the above and below rather than right and left relation.—AKC's note.

Alfred O. Mendel, identified on p 45.

TO PROFESSOR ALFRED O. MENDEL

August 5, 1947

Dear Dr Mendel:

Circle, vertical, and horizontal: to answer at length would come near to writing a book. You will observe that the essential parts of a circle are centre, radius, and circumference; and that if the radius is large, radius = vertical, circumference = horizontal. In terms of light, the centre = *lux*, radius (ray) = *lumen*, circumference = *color*, and what is outside the circumference = outer darkness. In terms of textile symbolism, radii = warp, circumference = woof. If there are many concentric circles, each circumference represents a *level* of reference or world, ie, locus of compossibles. Also, in any world, centre corresponds to sun, area to atmosphere, circumference to earth. Further, vertical (radius, ray) will be



"male" to horizontal (circumference) "female". The position of the individual existing in time and space will always be at which a radius meets the circumference; motion along the circumference will be temporal, while centrifugal or centripetal (down or up) motion will be atemporal; hence spiritual progress from the point of view of the individual ex-istent in time, being the "resultent" of both motions, horizontal and vertical, will be spiral; the symbol of the double spiral representing the whole process of descent and ascent from the centre. A purely materialistic concept of progress, however, will be represented only by motion along the circumference; while on the other hand, centripetal motion considered by itself will be "sudden", having precisely the well-known "instantaneity" of "illumination". This last you will see more easily when you get my *Time and Eternity* (to be published, probably by September, by Artibus Asiae, Villa Maria, Ascona, Switzerland).

For some references: my "Kha . . ." in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 1, p 45; my "Rgveda 10.90.1", note 37, in *JAOS* 66 (I send you this); my "Symplegades" note 37 (I send you this also); René Guénon, *Le Symbolisme de la croix* and *La grande triade*; E. Underhill, *Ruysboreck*, 1915, p 167 (quoting *The Seven Cloisters*, ch xix); St Augustine, *De ordine* 1.3; Rumi, *Mathnawi* 3, 3530; Parmenides in Aristotle *On Xenophanes* 977B and 978B; St Bonaventura, *Itin mentis* 5; Dante, *Paradiso* (many references to "circle" and "centre", *punto*); Dionysius, *De Div nom* 5.6; Meister Eckhart in Pfeiffer, p 503; Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.8.8.

I might find more, but this is all I have time for now.

I send with the two other papers also the "*Janua Coeli*", but I must ask you to return this, as I have only a few lending copies.

Very sincerely,

PS: Boethius, *De consol* 4.6: *Ad id quod est quod gignitur, ad aeternitatem tempus, ad punctum medium circulus, ita est fati series mobilis ad providentiae stabilem simplicitatem.*

Alfred O. Mendel, as above.

'Kha and Other Words Denoting "Zero" in Connection with the Metaphysics of Space' was actually published in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* VII, 1934, University of London.

'Rgveda X.90.1: atv atisthad dasangulam', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXVI, 1946, no 2.

'Symplegades', in *Studies and Essays in the History of Science and Learning Offered in Homance to George Sarton on the Occasion of His sixtieth Birthday*, edited by M. F. Ashley Montagu, New York, 1947.

'Svayamatmna: Janua Coeli', in *Zalmoxis*, II, no 1, Paris, 1939.

René Guénon, see Appendix.

Meister Eckhart, edited by Franz Pfeiffer.

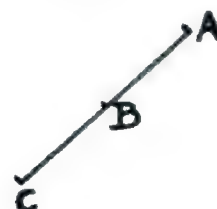
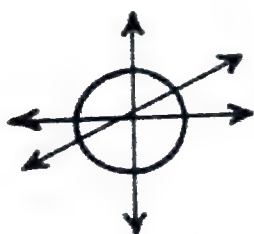
This letter was in answer to an appeal from Professor Mendel, who wrote the following: "Today I examined the first five books and articles among the hundreds that were written about symbolism, but could not yet find any explanation of the vertical and the horizontal stroke, and the circle. No doubt you know where I have to look—will you kindly give me a hint?" Note that AKC responded only a little over a month before his death.

TO PROFESSOR ROBERT ULICH

August 14, 1946

Dear Professor Ulich:

I hope you will not think it excessive if I add still another comment. In your book, p 200, the importance that Froebel attached to the *ball* interests me. This could be "fantastic" in him, if based only on personal fancies. Otherwise it could be very significant. If I had to choose any one symbol as the basis on which to expound the traditional ("perennial") philosophy, it would be the sphere or circle (hoop) with its centre and radii; I think no more would be necessary to support the whole development. For example, God as the circle of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere: revolving motion the best (freest) of the "seven" possible motions represented by the arms of the three dimensional cross and their intersection; rays as "extensions" (*teino*, *tan*), according to which individuals (their *termini* on any circumference, where



"color" appears, according to the recipient of light) participate in the divine luminous nature; exemplarism, whatever is contained at A being represented at B, C, etc, and conversely whatever is at B or C being present *eminently* at A; significance of ball games (1) contest for the possession of the Sun, (2) aim to drive the ball (oneself, Sun as in *RV* 1.115.1) through the goal posts, out of the "field", the "posts" representing the contraries or Symplegades. Cf Cusa, *De vis Dei* IX *ad fin.* So Froebel might indeed have meant such by his emphasis on the ball; whether he did, I do not know. We who have forgotten the metaphysical significance of the traditional "sports" (in which, as in the traditional arts, there was always a "polar balance" of physical and metaphysical) certainly overlook enormous ranges of educational possibility. I wonder also whether Froebel realised that there is a point at which the distinction of work from play clapses?

Very sincerely,

Ulich, Heinrich Gottlob Robert, professor and chairman of the department of education at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

TO JOHN LAYARD

November 26, 1945

Dear John Layard:

The basic idea is similar to Meister Eckhart's "he who sees me sees my child" ie, the real "me" is not the visible man, but his child, ie, Christ brought to birth in the soul. So to, Rumi, "The body, like a mother, is big with the spirit-child", *Mathnawi* i.35.11. The idea is formulated also as part of the symbolism of archery; the drawn bow is pregnant with the arrow-child; identify yourself with the arrow [and] let fly (*muc*, the root in *moksa*), straight to the mark, which is God.

John Layard, identified on p 42

This was a postcard, without salutation and unsigned.



TO JOHN LAYARD

November 24, 1945

Dear John Layard:

Very many thanks for your letter and the reprints, of which "the Incest Taboo" and the "Poltergeist" articles particularly interested me. Your letter raises so many points that I wish, indeed, we could meet; but it is some thirty years since I was in England and I hardly expect ever to be there again; our plan is to retire to the Himalayas some four years hence. You ask about people of my kind in England: I would suggest Marco Pallis (13 Fulwood Park, Liverpool), author of *Peaks and Lamas*, which you may have read. René Guénon is in Cairo; but I think his last book, *La Règne de la quantité*, would interest you. Regarding my own writings, I would like to trouble you to let me know what I have sent you already and especially whether you received "Spiritual Paternity" (*Psychiatry*, 1945). What of mine is available in print can best be found at Luzac in London; they publish my *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* and will be issuing a companion volume almost immediately, *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?*, and I think you might find both of these useful, especially the latter. You probably do know N. K. Chawick's *Poetry and Prophecy*, and also Paul Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher*; the mention of these two books reminds me to say that where I am a little inclined to differ from you is that I very much doubt that the *raison d'être* of taboos, etc, was "unknown to the conscious minds of the earliest cultures"; it much rather seems to me that these meanings have been forgotten since, by degrees; this will apply also to archetypal symbols generally. In other words, I do not believe in the validity of the application of the notion of evolution to the ideas of metaphysics.

I fully agree to your comments re *Self* (the Socratic *daimon*, Logos; Heracleitus' *Common Reason*, etc). However, the distinction of Self from self, *le soi* from *le moi*, is not mine; it has long been necessitated by the exact equivalence of such expression as *atamano'tma* ("the Atman of the Atman"), to such as Philo's "a spirit guide, munificent, to lead us through life's mysteries" (*Menander*, fr 549K—F. G. Allison's translation). The realisation that *duo sunt in homine* is almost universal and

our everyday language bears innumerable traces of it, for instance when we speak of "forgetting oneself" in explanation of some error committed. So we have throughout literature the contrasted notions of "self-love" (wrong) and "Self-love" (good). I have lots of references to Self-love from Upanishads, St Thomas, Ficino, but not under my hand at the moment. However, see *Brhadarnyaka Up* I.4.8, and II.4; Ficino in Kristeller pp 279, 287; St Thomas, *Sum Theol* II-II.26.4; Scott, *Hermetica* II.145 on the true Aristotelian.

On caste, I have just finished a lecture, and will send you a copy when available. The best book is Hocart's *Les Castes*. For "externalisation of psychological functions in terms of the structure of society", see Plato, *Republic* 441; "the same castes (=jati) are to be found in the city and in the soul of each of us."

About circles and straight lines: A Jeremias, *Der Antichrist in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 1930, p 4: *Der Abendlander denkt linienhaft in die Ferne, darum mechanisch, areligios, faustisch . . . das Morgenland und die Bibel denken nicht linienhaft, sondern seitraumlich, spiralisch, kreislaufig. Das Welgeschehen geht in Spiralen, die sich bis in die Vollendung fortsetzen.*

Very sincerely,

John Layard, identified on p 42.

'The Incest Taboo and the Virgin Archtype', *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, vol XII, 1945.  
The 'Poltergeist' articles are not further identified.

Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, see Bibliography.

René Guéon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, translated by Lord Northborne, see Bibliography.

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TO JOHN LAYARD

November 26, 1945

Dear Dr Layard:

I have taken the greatest pleasure in your Eranos paper. Understanding, candor, and courage are all in it.

The basic idea is similar to Meister Eckhart's "He who sees me sees my child", ie, the real "me" is not the visible man, but his child, ie, Christ brought to birth in the soul. So too, Rumi, "The body, like the mother, is big with the spirit-child" (*Mathnawi* 13.511). The idea is formulated also as a part of the symbolism of archery; the drawn bow is pregnant with the arrow-child; identify yourself with the arrow, let fly, straight to the mark, which is God.

You doubtless know the Yama-Yami hymn of the *Rg-Veda*, but possibly not the *Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana* 1.53ff (see in *JAOS* XVI, 1894, 131ff) where the wooing is brought to a happy ending, the sun-child is born.

Our word *concept* is also noteworthy; the thing conceived is quite literally the offspring of a coition of (Skr) *manas* and *vac*. Apart from this fathering, "*Vac* only babbles".

P 273: "Moieties . . . Male and Female": involves the distinction of gender from sex, which scholars so little understand; the moieties are of different genders, but not sexually differentiated. Gender has to do with function, sex with characterisation, with specific physical organs. Moreover, every man and woman is bisexual; and when it is said that in heaven there are only "masculine virgins", it means that salvation is only for the virile, not for the effeminate; not that women as such are excluded.

Your Ishtar corresponds to Vedic *Usas* ("Dawn"); *Sri* (Fortune, *Regnum*); *Vac* (for whom the Gods and Titans are ever fighting), all of whom are notably "free women" who will follow whatever hero really "wins" them.

Do you know the poem "Mary and the Blind Clerk" (for which see Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, I, 509). How painfully Coulton, from the moralistic point of view, misunderstands it; as if one might not gladly surrender one's physical vision for that sight (cf Rumi's "His [God's] eye for mine, what an exchange!").



all traditional philosophers, East and West, but also that of modern psychologists, eg, Hadley and Sullivan.

The way of healing is one of integration; resolution of the psychomachy; making peace with one's Self; *su werden as du bist*. All this can be found in all the great religious contexts. In a forthcoming article (containing references on "being at war with one's Self") I have argued that Satan is the Ego, Christ (or however the immanent deity be called) the Hero, and the battle "within you", to be finished only when it has been decided (in Plato's words) "which shall rule, the better or the worse"; a battle that St Paul had won when he could say "I live, yet not I, but Christ in me". The nature of the resultant peace is wonderfully stated in *Aitareya Aranyaka* II.3.7, "This self (Ego) lends itself to that Self, and that Self to this self; they coalesce (or, are wedded). With the one aspect (*rupa*, "form") he is united with yonder world, and with the other aspect he is united with this world."

I do not agree that there has been any mistake in your *work*; it has healed others, and delayed at the same time the coming on of your own crisis. Neither were you wrong to publish it. Much in the *Stone Men*, "Hare" and "Incest" has positive value for others; and you should realise that misunderstandings and mis-interpretation are inevitable, and ignore them. It is only your present condition that makes you turn against the most solid ground you have been standing on.

But you caught the very sickness you were treating. You did not have the art of self-insulation, or detachment; you did not, so to speak, shake the effluvium from your fingers after laying on your hands. If you don't do that, you may still cure the victim, but at the price of taking on his burden, which is neither necessary nor is it right, since it is for you to remain *intact* in order that you may cure others. Only the well can cure the sick, and it is utterly true that "charity begins at home"; you cannot love others without first loving your Self, which is not only yours, but that of all beings.

Now cut your losses. Repentance and remorse are two different things. "Repentance" (*metanoia*), is literally and properly a "change of mind", as if from sickness to health. The past is no more relevant. You have been a martyr to psychology. But there is no reward for such a martyrdom; forget it. Learn the *traditional psychology* and *Der Weg zum Selbst*

(this last is an allusion not merely to the Vedanta, but to Zimmer's work, published by the Rascher-Verlag in Zurich, and that I think you ought to read). There is nothing better than Vedanta, but I know of no Sri Ramana Maharsi living in Europe. I do not trust your young English Vedantist, nor any of the missionary Swamis; though there may be exceptions, most of them are far from *solid*. I would not hastily let any one of them have a chance to become for you another "false guide". Not even Vivekananda, were he still alive. Were Ramakrishna himself available, that would be another matter.

But there are other ways, in some respects for a European easier. It was emphasized in India by Jahangir and by Dara Shikuh that the Muslim *Tasawwuf* (Sufism) and the Hindu Vedanta "are the same". You say "the written word" is of little use to you and that you need some personal contact. And it is true that everyone needs to find their Guru. At the same time it is certainly vain to *search* for one; the right answers will come when we are ready and competent to ask the right questions, and not before; and so with the Guru. There is a necessary "intellectual preparation". That is why, in spite of your rejection of the written word, I feel you may perhaps not have found the written words you need, and why I suggest that you lay aside the sources you are most familiar with and plunge into a study of the traditional sources—Greek, Islamic, and Indian and Chinese. Try to build up your physical strength, and at the same time to undertake to spend *at least* two years in making yourself familiar with Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus, Hermes, Dionysius, Eckhart, Boehme, the Brahmanas, Upanishads and the Gita, and the Sufis, especially Shams-i-Tabriz, Jalal ud'Din Rumi, Ibn al-Arabi, Attar (for the latter begin with Fitzgerald's version of the *Bird Parliament*, a work of *infinitely* more importance and greater beauty than his Omar Khayyam). Overcome the idea that you, John Layard, are the "doer" and lay the burden on the One who bears it easily. For in the words of Apollonius of Tyana (whose *Vita* by Philostratus you should read by all means) in his *Ep* 58 to Valerius (stricken by the loss of his son, a loss by death, but quite analagous to your own loss that I asked you to "cut"), whom he exhorts in part as follows:

Why, then, has error passed unrefuted on such a scale? The reason is that some opine that what they suffer they



*themselves* have brought about, not understanding that one who is 'born of parents' was no more generated *by* his parents than is what grows on earth a growth *of* earth, or that the passion of phenomenal beings is not that of each, but that of One in everyeach. And this One cannot be rightly spoken of except we name it the First Essence. For this alone is both the agent and the patient making *Itself* all things unto all and throughout all—God Eternal, the idiosyncrasy of whose Essence is wronged when it is detracted from by names and masks. But that is the lesser evil; the greater is that anyone should wail when God is born out of the man [this refers to the son's death when he gave up the (holy) Ghost, and the Spirit returned to God who gave it] by what is only a change of place and not of nature. The truth is that you ought not to lament a death as it affects *yourself*, but honor and revere it. And the best and fitting honor is to remit to God that which was born here, yourself continuing to rule as before over the human beings entrusted to your care.

Thus Apollonius offers to Valerius "the consolation of Philosophy" (of Boethius), or rather, metaphysics. Whatever can be lost was never really yours. One must consider on what basis "things" (people, ideas, causes, all that one can be "attached" to or wish to "serve") are really *dear* to us; of *Brhadaranyaka Up* I.4.8. ("Of one who speaks of anything but the Self as 'dear', one should say 'He will lose what he holds dear.' "); and *ibid* 2.4 and 4.5 ("not for the sake of others are others 'dear', but for the sake of the Self."); and Plato, *Lysis* 219–229 ("the one First 'dear', for the sake of which all other things can be said to be 'dear' "); viz, their and our Self. I think you have been too much attached to the idea of service to be rendered to *others*, over-looking that the very notion of "self and others" is a part of the great delusion. Nothing is more dangerous than "altruism", for it is only the correlative of "egoism". You can only "love thy neighbour as thyself" when you have realised that what he *is*, you *are*, not what he calls "himself", not "what thou callest 'I' or 'myself' ", but "*That art thou*" which underlies the names and masks of "neighbour" and "self".

You may have outgrown the temporary form of European civilization that has wounded you, and in which you recognize your own destruction; and of which Picasso's *Guernica* is a



realistic picture. Moreover, it has done with you. I think you are no longer *of* it; not a Utopist, who can believe in salvation by plans alone, without a change of heart. I said above that there were more ways than those you have already followed, and you have also emphasized that you need personal help. I send you the following names in Europe. . . .

All this in order that you may in the end be able to return to your own work—to *heautou prattein kata phusin*—but “otherwise minded than now”, ie, may “return to the cave” to *play* your part in the world without letting it involve you.

Please let me hear from you again soon. I do not think you should try to come to the USA. I have not reached the end of the road myself, and am only your fellow-traveller, though possibly better equipped with road-maps. I hope that what I have said may be of some assistance; do not hesitate to write further if there is anything you think I can do more.

With kindest regards and sympathy,

John Layard, cultural anthropologist and Jungian analyst, as above; author of *The Stone Men of Malakula*, London, 1942; ‘The Incest Taboo and the Virgin Archetype’, *Eranos Jahrbuch*, XII, 1945; ‘The Lady of the Hare: a Study in the Healing Power of Dreams’, *Psychiatry*, VIII, 1945; etc.

Cf AKC’s study, ‘On the Indian and Traditional Psychology, or Rather Pneumatology’, in *Coomaraswamy: Selected Papers*, vol II, *Metaphysics*; edited by Roger Lipsey, Bollingen Series LXXXIX, Princeton, 1977.

Heinrich Zimmer, *Der Weg zum Selbst*, Zurich, (date?).

*Salaman and Absal and The Bird Parliament*, as translated by Edward Fitzgerald, various editions.

Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, translated by F. C. Conybeare, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, and London, England.

The names of those to whom Dr Coomaraswamy referred Dr Layard have been withheld at their request.

TO FATHER H. C. E. ZACHARIAS

August 12, 1935

Dear Father Zacharias:

Very many thanks for your kind letter and reminiscence. I am entitled to assume that you deprecate the constant use of

"emanation" in the Dominican Fathers' version of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*.

I must also premise that we have, as it were by hypothesis, two different preoccupations (I do not, of course, mean *whole* preoccupation): you to establish not only the truth, but at the same time the exclusive truth of the Christian tradition, and I (who if required to profess, am a Hindu rather than a Christian, although I can in fact accept and defend every Catholic doctrine except this one of *exclusive* truth) to demonstrate the truth of both traditions, to expound what is for me the faith, not *a* faith. Is this "exclusive truth", I wonder, really a matter of faith? As to that, I am not informed. In any case, I think the Catholic student of Hindu doctrine should ask himself whether, if it could be proved (such things cannot, of course, be "proved" in the ordinary sense of the word) that Hindu tradition is also a divine revelation, and therefore also infallible, he would feel that his own faith was shaken or destroyed; an affirmative answer would surely be shocking.

I am aware that the problem involved is that of pantheism. It would take too long to write fully on this subject, which I hope to do elsewhere; I will only say that we repudiate what from our point of view is strictly nothing but the *accusation* of pantheism levelled at Hindu doctrine, and as an accusation comparable to the Islamic denunciation of Christianity as polytheistic, a position which might seem to be supported by such words as those of *Sum Theol* I q 31, a 2: "We do not say *the only* God, for deity is common to several." Cf also note 42 in my *New Approach to the Vedas*, and Pulby, "Note sur le pantheisme" in *Le Voile d'Isis*, no. 186

With these premises, I will say that it is true that *srj* implies a "pouring out" or perhaps "osmosis". After creatures have been thus poured out (*srj*) the deity in numerous *Br* passages is spoken of as "emptied out like a leathern water bag." Yet he survives. Alternatively, he is "cut to pieces" or "thought into many parts" (*RV*) one becoming many in this way, which may be represented either as a voluntary or as an imposed passion, just as the Crucifixion is both of these at the same time. In any case, the deity has to be put together again, which is done symbolically in the ritual; which in ultimate significance I should be understood to mean . . . a reduction of the arms of the cross to their point of intersection. The notion of a "reintegra-



tion" (*samskr*) to be accomplished ritually could be said to have a pantheistic look.

But: you must be fully aware how dangerous it is to take into consideration one part of a doctrine, excluding the whole context. It is repeatedly affirmed (RV and AV) that "only a fourth part of him becomes (*abhavat*) here", "three fourths remain within" (*nihita guha* = *ab intra*). Distinctions are repeatedly drawn between what of him is finite and explicit, and what infinite and untold (*parimita*, *nirukta*, and their opposites); eg, rites with spoken words having to do with the finite, ritual without words and *orationes secretae* (when *mānasa stuvante*) with the infinite. There are also the explicit statements (AV and Ups) that when plenum is taken from plenum, plenum remains.

Now, as to material cause in Christian formulation. St Thomas speaks of "nature" as remote from God but yet "retaining" a certain likeness. Likeness to what? Surely to *natura naturans*, *Creatrix*, *Deus*, the "wisdom" that in Proverbs was with God in all his work. If nature were *absolutely* remote from God, that would limit his infinity. To put the matter in another way, take the doctrine of the two births of Christ, temporal and eternal (Vedic and Indian parallels are plenty). There must be in some sense a mother in both cases, since the birth is always a vital operation. In the case of the eternal birth (that of whom we should employ the expression "Eternal Avatar" as distinct from other *avatarana*), is not the "mother" the divine nature, not distinguished from that divine essence, these being one in Him? In this sense, it seems to me that Christian doctrine assumed in God a material cause *in principe*, which only becomes a material cause remote from Him in fact; in other words, *secundum rationem intelligendi sive dicendi*, when the creation takes place and the divine manner of knowing is replaced for all beings in multiplicity by the subject and object or dual manner of knowing, which determines inevitably the kind of language in which eternal truths are worded. Is not this latter manner of knowing on our part really the occasion of the crucifixion in its eternal aspect? Truly, we know not what we do, and need to be forgiven! It does not alter the matter if we say *ex nihilo fit*, for what is *nihil* but potentiality as distinguished from act? If then he is "emptied out", or as Eckhart puts it, "gives the whole of what he can afford", what does this mean



except the same as to say that he is wholly in act? By infallible necessity he gives what of himself can be given, viz. the Son, the Light; what he cannot give being the God-head, the divine darkness, his infinity.

Hence if *srj* be strictly "emanate" (and it seems to me "ex-press" is only a more active word for what is in any case as it were a fontality), it represents at the worst an imperfect choice of words, as in the Dominican Fathers' *Summa Theologica*. But taking into consideration the explicit character of Vedic Exemplarism ("thou art the omniform light", *joytir visvarupam*; "integral multiplicity", *visvam ekam*; "omniform likeness of a thousand", *sahasrasya pratimam visvarupam*, etc) I should say that *srsti* is the same as "fontal raying" (Dionysius), the act of being, complete in itself, although to our temporal spatial understanding appearing to go outward from itself. Cf "He proceedeth foremost while yet remaining in his ground" (*anu agram carati kseti budhlunah*, RV III, 55.6).

I am sending you a couple of recent papers, one on Scholastic Aesthetic which I am sure you will be interested in. I would send some others on Vedic Exemplarism, Vedic monotheism, etc, later as they appear, if you would care to receive them.

Meanwhile, with cordial greetings,

Very sincerely,

PS: It seems to me that there is some danger of our forgetting that the current meaning of "express", hardly more than of to "say" omits a good part of the original force, to "press our" Re *srj*, cf also *Bhagavad Gita*: *nakartvam ne karmani srjati*.

H. C. E. Zacharias, PhD, Fribourg, Switzerland, was a layman, which was unclear at the time AKC wrote this letter.

*Summa Theologica* of St Thomas Aquinas, translated literally by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Burnes, Oates and Washbourne, Ltd; see Bibliography.

Pierre Pulby, 'Note sur le pantheisme', *Le Voile d'Isis*, Paris, 1935; this journal later carried the name *Etudes Traditionnelles*.

*A New Approach to the Veda, an Essay in Translation and Exegesis*, London, 1933.

'Vedic Exemplarism', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, I, 1936.

'Vedic Monotheis', *Dr S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar Commemoration Volume*, Madras, 1936.

Both of the last two references are reproduced in Coomaraswamy: *Selected Papers*, Vol II, *Metaphysics*; see Bibliography.

TO H. C. E. ZACHARIAS

August 18, 1935

Dear Father Zacharias:

The following continues my previous letter. It would not, you see, occur to us to have to defend the Hindu doctrine against an assumption of pantheism, any more than it would naturally occur to a Christian to have to defend Christianity against a charge of polytheism. Nevertheless, the defence can be made in either case. In addition to the previously cited passages I come across the following, which throw light on what was understood to be meant by *srj*. In *Bhagavad Gita*, V. 14, *nakartatvam ne karmani srjati*. More cogent, *Mundaka Up*, I.7, *yatha urnanabhi srjate ghrnate. . .tatha aksarat sambhavati iha visvam*, where *aksarat*, "from him that does not flow", "from the non-proceeding" leaves no meaning possible for *srjate ghrnate* but that of "seems to withdraw", (*ghrnate* is of course literally "dessicates", one might say that as fontal, the deity is here envisaged as *Parjanya*, as inflowing or indrawing, as *Susna*). There is again Bhaskara's exposition of mathematical infinity as *comparable* to that of deity in that it is neither increased nor diminished by whatever is added to or taken from it, *impassissima verba*: "just as in the Unmoved Infinite (*anante 'cyute*) there is no modification (*vikarah*) when hosts of beings are emanated or withdrawn" (*syal laya-srsti-kale 'nante' cyute bhutaganesu yadvat*). After all, what we want to get at is what Hindus understand by *srj*, and here it is as always in such cases largely a matter of *crede ut intelligas* followed by *intellige ut credas*. Philology is not enough, the word must *live* in you. As an outsider, you naturally claim a right of "free examination", as do Protestants with regard to the teachings of the Church, yet however learned they may be, they may have missed the essential. You have a right to "free examination", or at any rate assume the right; so I do not ask you to agree with me. But I do ask you to ask yourself faithfully the preliminary question, whether you would be disappointed if you became convinced

that pantheism is not to be found in Hinduism. If the answer were "yes", could you still claim to be able to make a perfectly unbiased judgement?

I might add that a very usual Christian criticism of Hinduism is based on the "pure illusion" interpretation of the *Maya* doctrine. In this case, if there is no real world, it cannot at the same time be argued that an origin of this non-existent world from its source implies a materiality in that source. I should not, however, myself resort to this counter-argument, as I understand the true and original meaning of *maya* to be *natura naturans*, as the "means whereby" the essence is manifested.

Very sincerely,

H. C. E. Zacharias, as above.

Editors' note: the following footnote, taken from AKC's published writings, explains the difference between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*.

"Although St Thomas is speaking here with special reference to the art of medicine, in which means are employed, it is not these natural things that effect the cure, but rather Nature herself, 'operating' through them; just as it is not the tools, but their operator that makes the work of art. 'Natural things depend on the divine intellect, as do things made by art upon a human intellect' (*Sum Theol* I, q 17, 1 C). The 'Nature', then, that all art 'imitates' in operation is not the objective world itself, our environment, *natura naturata*, but *natura naturans*, *Creatrix Universalis*, *Deus*, 'that nature, to wit, which created all others'" (St Augustine, *De Trinitate* XIV. 9).

TO H. C. E. ZACHARIAS

October 1, 1935

Dear Dr Zacharias:

Very many thanks for your letter. I am very glad to see that we have grounds for agreement on many matters. The tradition of a primordial revelation received by "Adam" (our "Manu") especially constitutes a point of departure from which can be discussed the relative positions of the now separately maintained traditions. I do not agree that the Vedic tradition embodies a large amount of irrelevant matter, but rather that it preserves more of the primordial doctrine than is to be found elsewhere, though I would agree that the whole of the primordial doctrine underlies and is implicit in every branch.



So far from finding any inconsistencies in the Vedic tradition, it is precisely its extraordinary consistency that is the source of its convincing charm (I use this expression bearing in mind that Scholastic and Indian aesthetic consider beauty as related rather to cognition than feeling).

Now, as to material cause: there cannot have such a confusion of the "subtle" (*sūkṣma*) with the immaterial as you suggest. For the expression *sūkṣma* and *sthūla* refer only to *śarīra*; while the deity is outwardly *śarīravat* (incarnate), he is inwardly *asarīra*, discarnate. A confusion of *sūkṣma* with *asarīra* would be inconceivable. As to the deity being "all act", yes if by deity we mean strictly speaking "God". But if we consider the more penetrating theology in which a distinction is drawn between "God" and "Godhead", notwithstanding that both conjointly form a Supreme Identity (*Skr, tad ekam, satasat*, etc), then it is to be remembered that He is both eternal work and eternal rest. That He does not *proceed* from potentiality to act (as we do) is true, because His act of being is not in time; nevertheless as Godhead He is all potentiality and as God all act. It is in this sense that I spoke of the "Material" because being represented in Him *in principe*, the Godhead representing in fact that *nihil* out of which the world was made, that divine darkness that is interpenetrated by the creative light of the Supernal Sun. Vedic tradition does not, I think, employ any category exactly corresponding to the expression "spirit and matter", but rather those of "body, soul and spirit" (*rūpa, nāma, ātman*). "Matter", in other words, is a *phenomenon*, rather than a thing. Nothing is more constant in Vedic tradition than the insistence on this, that in so far as He reveals himself phenomenally (in phenomenal symbols, in the theophany, by the traces of his footprints, etc), all of these forms are imposed by the worshipper, and are not intrinsic or specific to himself, who lends Himself nevertheless to every imagery in which He is imagined. In other words, the "material" cause is not in the same sense as the other causes, a real cause, but simply the possibility of manifesting form. Thus I have never said, nor has Indian tradition taught that there exists in Him a material cause in any concrete sense, but merely that there lies in Him all possibility; we say that in Him all is act just because apart from time He realises all this possibility, whereas we develop only some of these potentialities at any one time and in the course of

a process in which effect seems to succeed cause. The above remarks apply also to what you say about passivity in Him; insofar as He is "self-intent", that self which He regards must be called in relation to that self *which regards*. The Godhead is passive in relation to God, though both are a Supreme Identity, viz, the identity of what Thomas calls a "conjoint principle". If there were not both an active and a passive relation conceivable within this identity of conjoint principles, it would be impossible to speak as Thomas does, of the act of fecundation latent in eternity as being a "vital operation". In other words, the divine *nature* is the eternal Mother of the manifested Son, just as Mary is the temporal mother. Being Father-Mother (essence-nature), either designation is that of the First Principle. It is very interesting that the doctrine of the two *Theotokoi* which is thus present in Christianity (and symbolized in the Coronation of the Virgin) should be so definitely and clearly developed in the Vedic tradition, and even exactly preserved in the heterodox systems of Buddhism and Jainism. There could hardly be a better illustration of the strict orthodoxy of both traditions. ★

As regards Thomas★★, I may add that already among the Scholastics, he is evidently of a rationalistic tendency. My own Christianity would tend rather to be Augustinian (Christian Platonism), [that of] Erigena [and] Eckhart. It seems to me that it is significant that the full endorsement of Thomas took place only in the latter part of the 19th century. When the Church at that time realised the need of a return to the Middle Ages, was it not perhaps the case that Thomas, represented, so to speak, all that could be endured? I by no means intend to say that I have not myself a tremendous admiration for and appreciation of Thomas, but that while I find in him rather a commentary to be used, a rational exposition, I find in Eckhart a far more biting truth, irresistible in quite a different way. Not that they teach different things, but that their emphasis is different, and Eckhart comes nearer to the Indian and my own way of seeing God.

With most kind regards,

Very sincerely,

H. C. E. Zacharias, as above.



\*The contradiction in these last two sentences may well have been inadvertent. In any event, in his later years AKC definitely held that Buddhism was an orthodox tradition and believed in the orthodoxy even of Jainism. He and Marco Pallis were instrumental in getting René Guénon to accept the orthodoxy of the former, which was born from Hinduism in ways analogous to the birth of Christianity from Judaism. Jainism would seem more problematic at first glance. But one must consider the great antiquity of Jainism: Jain legends, eg, make of their twenty-second (of twenty-four) *Tirthankara* (one who overcomes) a contemporary of Krishna which implies that Jainism was an already venerable tradition at the time of the war which figures in the *Mahabharata*. By the canons of modern history, Jainism can be traced back at least as far as the third century BC. This great antiquity, the fact that Jains still form a viable community in India, and the broad concordance of Jain doctrine with that of Hinduism and Buddhism all point to the orthodoxy of Jainism.

\*\* The Thomas in question is of course, St Thomas Aquinas (circa 1225–1275) major intellectual figure in western Christianity and the 'Angelic Doctor' of Roman Catholicism.

TO MRS GRETCHEN FISKE WARREN

November 6, 1942

Dear Mrs Warren:

We must first of all be quite clear that the highest Mind, which the Upanishads sometimes call "Mind of the mind" or "Lord of the mind", while it is the principle of thought, does not "think". Thus Aristotle in *Met* XII. 9.5 says " . . . thinking cannot be the supreme good. Therefore, if we mean the highest Mind thinks itself (only), its 'thinking' is the Thinking of thinking", ie, principle of thinking. What we mean by thinking is of contingent things, in terms of subject and object. Hence neither the aesthetic (sensitive) nor the poetic (creative) mind are the highest. We get a hierarchy in *Met* I.1.17, where in ascending order we have sensation, experience (*emperiria*), art (*techne*) of the skilled workman, and architectonics, "and the speculative sciences (*theoretikea*) are superior to the productive (*poietichai*)." That is to say, feeling is inferior to productive action, and action inferior to contemplation. Similarly, *De Anima* III.5.4: Mind in creative act is superior to mind as passive recipient of experience; the latter (sensitive) mind is perishable and only "thinks" when it is acted upon from without; only when "separated" (cf *Maitri Upanishad* VI.34,6:



*kama-vivarjitam*, "from desire divided off"), and as it is in itself and impassible, is it immortal and eternal: *ibid*, 430 . . . , mind twofold, (a) when it becomes everything and (b) when it makes everything; of these two, (a) refers to the mind "in act" separated, impassible and unmixed; what is meant by "in act" is the identity of the mind with its object; ie, *Met* XII.7.8, 1072 B 20ff, when it is "thinking itself". Thus, once more, the activity of making is inferior to the *act* of being, and both, of course, [are superior] to the passivity of the sensitive mind; and that itself becomes everything is perfectly illustrated by *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* I.4.10: "The Brahman knew itself alone, thereby it becomes the All".★

Further, *Met* XII.7.1072 B f, goes on to say that the aforesaid impassible Mind in act (not meaning in "activity") is a contemplation (*theoria*), that it is life, life eternal, God Himself. And this is the background of John I, 3-4, "and that which was made was (had been) life in Him" (this is not RV, but the regular older understanding of the words, rendered by Eckhart, for example, in his Commentary on John, by *Quod factum est in ipso vita erat*). (The editor says "such is the reading in almost all the older manuscripts." It is a far better rendering than that of the Revised Version, ie, more intelligible.) Thus we have clearly before us the two acts involved in any "creation", viz *primus*, the contemplative, and *secundus*, the productive.

I am not perfectly clear what you want to get at, but the hierarchy starts from the aesthetic (sensitive) at the bottom, through productive activity in the middle, to contemplative possession of the form (without distinction of subject and object) at the top. Cf the series, *cogitatio*, *meditatio*, *contemplatio*.

Always cordially,

PS: St Thomas Aquinas, "When the mind attains to truth, it does not think, but perfectly contemplates the truth" (*Sum Theol* I.34.1 ad 2).

★This citation may, at first glance, seem out of context; but the "itself" in the second clause refers to the Divine Mind. Notwithstanding possible difficulties in this letter, we think AKC's main line of argument is sufficiently clear, and the letter is included because of the great importance of the topic discussed.

Mrs Gretchen Fiske Warren, Boston, Massachusetts

TO RICHARD GREGG

October 12, 1946

Dear Richard:

Your questions need a book for the answers! However, the universe embraces an indefinite series of "states of being" (cf Guénon's *Etats de l'être*; the expert yogi can "visit" and return from any of these at will. However, they are all strictly speaking states of "becoming", ie, of experience and of mutability in time; liberation is *from* time and all that time implies. The *Brahmaloka* itself is a series of states. Early Buddhism emphasizes that liberation is from both worlds, ie, the world in which one is and the future world, whatever it may be for anyone. Hence the Buddha is called "teacher of Gods *and* men"; he is the teacher of Brahmas and shows them the way to "final escape". A Buddha is not a Brahma; he has already occupied that high position in time past; now he is *brahma-bhuta*, "become Brahma", a very different matter. The Ego, whether ours or that of any God, is a postulate, not an essence; a pragmatic postulate, for no one can say of anything mutable that it is. Body and soul alike are for the Buddhist (and for St Augustine) equally mutable; St Augustine is thoroughly Buddhist and Vedantic when he says "Reason (*ratio* = *logos*) is immortal, and 'I' am defined as something both rational and mortal at the same time. . . . If I am Reason (*tat tvam asi*), then that by which I am called mortal is not mine" (*De Ordine* II.50),—virtually the common Buddhist formula, "That is not I, that is not myself, that is not mine." Liberation follows when we can detach our consciousness of being from identification with the notion of being *this* man or *this* God. It is only relatively better to be a God than a man; both are limited conditions.

Vedanta and Buddhism both allow of a *karma-mukti*; liberation may take place here and now, or at death, or after death from the position in some other state of being that corresponds to the stage in the process of becoming what we are, that has actually been reached. This life is determinative only in this sense, that what we are when we are at the point of death, that we still are immediately afterwards; as Boehme says, the soul goes nowhere after death where it is not already. But in that new condition further growth can be made.\*



"Twenty-one" is a simple matter; the (Supernal) Sun is often called the "twenty-first from here" and "what is beyond him the twenty-second" just because seven worlds, each with three levels (earth, air, sky, or ground, space, and roof) make twenty-one. I point this out in "RV X.90.1", note 37, and elsewhere. Cosmologies vary in detail, but have many fundamentals in common; eg, the seven rays of the sun, with corresponding seven directions of motion; the notion of the (sun)-door through which one breaks out of the cosmos = also the passage of the Symplegades which are the "pairs of opposites" of which, as Cusa says, the "wall of the celestial paradise is built": the narrow way and the straight gate passing between them (as pointed out in my review of *The Lady of the Hare* in *Psychiatry*, VIII, 1945, and elsewhere).

As to *karma*: causality operates in *any* world, in any order of time; but does not imply succession in the timeless, where there is no sequence of cause and effect, beginning and end, essence and existence, being and knowledge.

*Arhat* is virtually synonymous with "Buddha"; both can be used in place of each other. Of such liberated beings, the life is "hidden"; only to others does it seem to be in time. I don't think there are any fundamental differences between the *Mahayana* and the *Hinayana*. In any case, "reincarnation" is only a *façon de parler* bound up with and inseparable from that of the postulated Ego; it is a process, not the same "individual" that reincarnates; and in fact, in this sense the "reincarnation" or "becoming" from which liberation is desired is that which goes on all the time, from moment to moment; becoming in a future life is only a continuation of this present becoming; no one who still is anyone can have escaped it.

The phrase "psychic residues" does not properly apply to these continuations of persons elsewhere, but only to pseudo-personalities or "wandering influences" in process of disintegration, and which the spiritualistic medium temporarily enlivens and communicates with—a procedure abhorrent to all orthodox traditions. Communication with the dead and the Gods is possible, but only by our going to them, not their coming to us (in general; some modification might be needed here); in early Buddhism, competent contemplatives are constantly represented as "visiting" some heaven, and even the *Brahmaloka* (Empyrean).



I think this amounts to some kind of answer to most of the questions. I daresay you saw some report of the Conference at Kenyon College; I found it quite interesting; I expect my speech (to which several papers, including the *N Y Times* gave nearly a column) will get printed in due course; it was mainly a destructive analysis of the "educational" and missionary efforts of the English speaking peoples in other lands; it was rather well received.

I am rather near finishing the paper (circa 70 pages of typewriting) on *Time and Eternity*; it traces the doctrine briefly enunciated by Boethius in the words *nunc fluens facit tempus, nunc stans facit aeternitatem*, in Indian, Greek, Islamic and Christian contexts.

We are both well and send our love. Greetings to all our friends.

Yours sincerely,

\* The reader is referred to the remarks of Whitall Perry in his Foreword to this collection, pp v–vii, and also to Frithjof Schuon's *Approches du phénomène religieux*, pp 26, 27; and to the same author's *Sur les traces de la religion pérenne*, pp 97ff.

Richard Gregg, American friend of Gandhi, wrote on non-violence.

René Guénon, *Les Etats multiples de l'être*, 1932 and numerous other editions; see Bibliography. See also his *L'Erreur spirite* for the traditional judgement upon and explanation of spiritualistic phenomena.

*Rigveda* X.90.1: *aty atisthad dasangulam'*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXVI, 1946.

'For What Heritage and to Whom Are the English-Speaking Peoples Responsible?', in *The Heritage of the English-Speaking Peoples and Their Responsibility*, Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, USA 1947.

*Time and Eternity* appeared as a book, published by *Artibus Asiae*, Ascona, Switzerland, 1947; see Bibliography.

TO PROFESSOR KURT VON FRITZ

October 29, 1945

Dear Professor von Fritz:

I read your article on Greek prayer with interest. May I offer a few suggestions? Mostly in the nature of parallels.

Page 8, the whole passage from "Yet . . . god" 7, with

note 7 corresponding almost exactly to what one has in India where there is 1) no early authority for "rebirth" in the commonly understood sense of reincarnation on earth (cf my "Recollection, Indian and Platonic" and "The One and Only Transmigrant"), and 2) the concept of a "participation in the eternity of life by knowledge of it" which is precisely what we find in the Brahmanas and Upanishads. I would add that the dual concept of "Hades", the otherworld, land of the dead, land of no return, as *either* a "heaven" or "hell", according to the quality of those who go there, is very widespread; one might say that the concept of a distinct place is exoteric, that of distinct conditions, the esoteric doctrine. On the question of "mystic deification", is not this rather implied by the equation of Zeus with Ether (Aeschylus, *Euripides*) and such passages as *Eur*, fr 971; and *Chrys*, fr 836?

Note 15: so in India. I think the notion of a miracle as something against nature is something comparatively modern. The traditional notion is of the exercise of latent powers of which the control can be gained by anyone who follows the necessary procedure. Hence a Hindu would naturally wonder why a Christian is so much embarrassed by the Gospel "miracles".

Page 26: So the art or skill with which the Vedic hymns are constructed (often with comparison to other crafts, esp of joinery) is regarded as pleasing to the gods.

Regarding the last complete sentence on this page: if I were describing the Vedic conception of sacrifice, I would say that exoterically it implies the giving up of something to the deity, which something in the ritual is really oneself represented by the victim or special symbol; but esoterically, not so much the actual giving up of 'something' as a *reference* of all activities whatever to God, the whole of life being then ritualized and made a symbolic sacrifice; with your words "joyful activity . . . most appropriate offering", compare them to the following in *Chandogya Upanishad* III, 17.3: "When one laughs and eats and practices sexual intercourse, that is a joining in the Chant and the Recitative". It becomes unnecessary to oppose profane and sacred. It may be regarded as one of the great defects of developed Christianity to have emphasized their opposition—acts are only profane in so far as they are treated as meaningless, and not "referred" to their ideas. So for example,

we distinguish "useful" from "fine arts" and so find ourselves opposed to the prehistoric and Platonic concept of arts that provide for the needs of the soul and body simultaneously.

Very sincerely,

Professor Kurt von Fritz, New Rochelle, New York, USA. His article is not further identified.

Both 'recollection, Indian and Platonic' and 'On the One and Only Transmigrant' appeared as supplements to the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXIV, 1944, and were published also in *Coomaraswamy: Selected Papers*; see Bibliography.

TO PROFESSOR KURT VON FRITZ

November 7, 1945

Many thanks for your response. Regarding its second paragraph, the sense of numerous presences is perhaps more emphatic in Greece, but certainly not absent in India (eg, thunder as the voice of the Gods). I think it would be true in India to say that the notion of *union* is with the impersonal, and that of association with the personal aspect of diety—but these two aspects merge into one another, as being the two natures of a single essence.

AKC

Postcard to the above.

TO DR J. N. FARQUHAR

February 1, 1928

Dear Dr Farquhar:

I am of course in general agreement with your view expressed on the origin of image worship in the last J R A S, except as regards the statement that a monotheist cannot be an "idolator". On the purely symbolic value of images (ie, non-fetishistic), there is an interesting passage in *Divyavadana*,



Chap LXXVII, where Mara impersonates Buddha and Upagupta worships the form thus produced, explaining that he is not worshipping Mara but the teacher who has departed "just as people venerating earthen images of gods do not revere the clay, but the immortal ones represented by them."

My views were actually based not on the tradition, but on the art itself and the literature. You will find a great deal of material bearing on the subject in the two papers of mine about to appear: "Origin of the Buddha Image", *Art Bulletin*, vol IX, pt iv, 1927; "Yaksas", *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Publications*, LXXX, no 6, Washington, D. C., 1928.

Also see in Charpentier, J, "Über den Begriff und die Etymologie von *Puja*", in *Festgabe Hermann Jacobi*, Bonn, 1926; and in Louis de La Vallée-Poussin, . . . *Indo-Européens et Indo-Iraniens: l'Inde jusque vers 300 av J-C*, Paris, 1924, pp 314ff.

Very sincerely,

PS: My two papers will be sent to the R. A. S. Library.

J. N. Farquhar, Manchester, England, was a well known writer on Indian art and culture.

R. A. S. = Royal Asiatic Society: J. R. A. S. = *Journal* of this same Society. For the two papers by AKC mentioned in the letter, see Bibliography.

TO PROFESSOR B. FARRINGTON

October 8, 1945

Dear Professor Farrington:

Many thanks for writing in reply to my note. What I meant was, that to explain *physis* in terms of techniques has been the universal procedure. And in reply to the further objection, I meant to suggest that what might have been described as "physical" [in] pre-Socratic thought is really "theological" thought, since the "nature" they were trying to explain was not our *natura naturata* but *natura naturans*, *creatrix universalis*, *Deus*, and that to do this is to imply that nature herself operates *per artem et ex voluntate*, ie, that she is a "Person".

For the rest, I find it very difficult to see uniqueness in any local thought; only local colour. I have often asserted that there is nothing peculiar to "Indian thought", and could support this by innumerable parallels. In fact, I try never to expound any doctrine from only a single source. I cannot, indeed, conceive of any valid private axioms. If by any chance *Psychiatry* is available there, you might care to look at my article in VIII, 3 (the last part published, Sept 1945).

Very sincerely,

Professor B. Farrington, Department of Classics, University College, Swansea, Wales.

This letter was in response to one from Prof. Farrington, part of which read as follows: ". . . Your point, if I have understood you, is that I am right in my description of early Greek science, but wrong in thinking the attitude of the early Greeks unique. In fact, you say, it is Hebrew, Sanskrit and Scholastic as well as Ionian Greek. But is there not a misunderstanding here: the early Greeks attempted to explain *physis* on the analogy of techniques. . . . the early Greeks had begun to distinguish a world of nature from the world of man, to conceive of the world of nature as the realm of objective law. . . ." "Spiritual Peternity and the Puppet-Complex", *Psychiatry*, VIII, 1945.

ANONYMOUS

Uncertain date

Sir;

It is stated that "naturalists maintain that 'reliable knowledge is publically verifiable.'" This position Mr Sheldon very properly opposes; it is in fact, unintelligible. The proper form of such a statement would be: "reliable knowledge is *repeatedly* verifiable." This is Aristotle's proposition that "knowledge (*epistēmē*) is of that which is always or usually so, never of exceptions" (*Met* VI, 2.12 & 1, 813); and a particularly interesting application can be made to the problem of the "historicity" of an "incarnation" or "descent" (*avatarana*); for example, the historicity of Jesus will be automatically excluded from the domain of reliable knowledge and intelligibility if it is not also assumed that there have been other such descents.

The supernaturalist maintains not only that the reality of the

Divine Being has been *repeatedly* verified, but that it can be repeatedly verified, viz, *by anyone* who is willing to pursue the "Ways" that have been charted by every great metaphysical teacher; and that it is just as "unscientific" for one who has not made the experiment to deny the validity of the experience as it would be unscientific for anyone to deny that hydrogen and oxygen can be combined to produce water, if he is unwilling to make the experiment, employing the necessary method. The layman who will not experiment, and will not believe the word of those who have experimented, may say that he is not interested in the subject, but he has no right to deny that the thing can be done; the scientist is in precisely the same position with respect to the vision of God.\*

It is also stated that the naturalist's *horror supernaturae* is not a capricious rejection of well-established beliefs "like the belief in ghosts". This is naive indeed. For ghosts, if anything, are phenomena, and as such a proper subject of scientific investigation; only because of their elusiveness, ghosts pertain to the realm of "occultism". But it is precisely in occultism that the supernaturalist is least of all interested (cf René Guénon, *L'Erreur spirite*, Paris, 1923 and 1930 [and 1952 and 1977]). The metaphysician, indeed, is astounded that so many scientists should have become "spiritualists" and should have attached so much importance to the survival of those very personalities which he—the metaphysician in this matter agreeing with the materialist—regards as nothing but "becomings" or processes ("behaviours"), and not as real beings or in any possible way immortal.

Finally it should be overlooked that "supernatural" no more implies "unnatural" than "superessential" means "unessential". The whole question depends, in part, upon what we mean by "nature"; generally speaking, the materialist and the supernaturalist mean two very different things, of which one is not a "thing" at all. The modern naturalist limits himself to the study of *natura naturata*, ie, phenomena; the interest of the theologian is in *natura naturans*, *creatrix universalis*, *Deus*, not so much in appearances as in that which appears. As for "miracles": the metaphysician will agree with the scientist that "the impossible can never happen". Orientals take it for granted that the power to work "wonders" can be acquired if the proper means are pursued; but he does not attach to such



performances any *spiritual* significance\*\*. For him, the possibility of working wonders (wonderful only because of their rarity, and in the same way that mathematical genius is wonderful) is inherent in the natural order of things; but the modern scientist, if confronted with an irrefutable "miracle" would have to abandon his faith in order!

I have never been able to see any *meaning* in the "conflict of science with religion"; those who take part in the quarrel are always mistaking each others' positions, and beating the air.

Sincerely,

\* 'Experiment' commonly denotes 'trial and error'; however, it also implies *experience*, *experienced* and *expert*, and these three latter senses are implied in this paragraph. To find one's way to salvation or enlightenment by 'trial and error' would be virtually an impossibility; practically, one must have the benefit of those who are *experienced* and *expert*.

\*\* It would appear that Dr Coomaraswamy had in mind here primarily theurgy. In monotheism, miracles definitely have spiritual significance. In Christianity, eg, consider the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, or the raising of Lazarus; in Judaism, consider the miracles of Moses; and in Islam, the Night Journey of the Prophet and the descent of the *Qu'ran*, to mention only a few of many miracles that serve as channels of grace, authentications and doctrinal illustrations.

TO GEORGE SARTON

November 3, 1944

My dear Sarton:

I am hoping that your tolerance may extend to an acceptance of the enclosed continuation of my earlier article. Personally, I cannot but think that to know precisely what ideas of an evolution were held prior to the formulation of modern ideas of mutation, and are by some still held side by side with these modern ideas, pertains to the history of knowledge: and that if the scientist and metaphysician could learn to think once more in one another's dialects, this would not only have a tremendous human value, but would avoid a great deal of the wasted motion that now goes on.

With kindest regards,

George Sarton, professor of the history of science, Harvard University.  
'Gradation and Evolution, II', *Isis*, XXXVIII, 1947.

TO GEORGE SARTON

June 21, 1943

My dear Sarton:

Many thanks for your "answers". I can agree with nearly everything. The misfortune is that while "science" deals with facts and not with values, there has been a tendency to think of these measurable facts as the only realities—hence the necessity expressed in your last sentence.

Where I most radically agree is as to *cogito ergo sum* which I have long regarded as an expression of the bottom level of European intelligence. "Thought" is something that we may direct, not what we are. I do not credit Descartes with a distinction between the two egos implied (1) in *cogito* and the other in *sum*—if one did credit him with that, then one could accept the statement in the sense that the phenomenon or manifestation (thinking) must imply an underlying reality. In any case, the most essential ego (in *sum*) is the one that "no longer thinks, but perfectly contemplates the truth". Thinking is a dialectic—a valuable tool, but only a tool.

I agree both that *scientia sine amore est—non sapientia, sed nihil*, and similarly *ars sine amore* is not *sophia*, but mere *techné*. These propositions are implied in the Scholastic operates *per intellectum et in volutate*.

Kindest regards.

George Sarton, professor of the history of science, Harvard University.

TO GEORGE SARTON

March 11, 1942

Dear Dr Sarton:

I am sending you "*Atmayaja*", parts of which may interest

you. I was told of your lecture this morning and apropos of the reference to Plato, when you said that the scientist's faith in knowledge as a panacea was an inheritance from Plato. Is not this overlooking that what our scientist means by "knowledge" and what Plato meant by "knowledge" are two *very* different things? Cf *Alcibiades* 1.130 E & F; *Protagoras* 357 E, 356 C; *Phaedrus* 277 E.

Best regards,

George Sarton, professor of the history of science, Harvard University.  
'*Atmayajna: Self-sacrifice*', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, VI, 1942.

TO GEORGE SARTON

Undated

PS: Similarly in India, eg: "The world is guarded by 'knowledge' ". But the word here (*Aitareya Aranyaka* 11.6) is *prajña* = *pronoia* = providence = Brahma, *not* the empirical "knowledge" which the scientist makes a panacea.

George Sarton, as above.

TO GEORGE SARTON

October 29, 1942

Milton Mayer on the "illiteracy" of scientists in *Common Sense* for November might interest you. It was somewhat the same point, the illiteracy of the anthropologists, that I meant to bring out in the *Psychiatry* article (current issue).

A postcard to George Sarton, as identified above.



TO HENRI FRANKFORT

April 16, 1947

Dear Frankfort:

From time to time I have been looking at your *Intellectual Adventure* . . . I don't much like the heading "Emancipation of Thought from Myth"; it seems to me to imply a sort of premature iconoclasm which most of us are not yet at all ready for. An iconoclasm not yet extended to the very notion of "self" as an entity is very incomplete. For the Sufis, to say "I" is polytheism. Few are "emancipated" even from history.

P 367: are you not overlooking that the Hebrew means "I become what I become", while "I am that I am" is a Greek interpretation?

P 380: Heracleitus, fr 19: *gnomē*, here = *gnomē* in Euripides, *Helen* 1015 (for which, as in all the material you are discussing, there are remarkable Indian parallels).

P 382: Heracleitus never denied *being*. One must not overlook that in *panta rei*, *panta* is in the *plural*. Being is not one of many, but inconnumerable. One must not confuse his "Fire" with its "measures" (cf my "Measures of Fire" in *O Instituto*, 100, Coimbra, 1942; and Ritter and Preller, *Hist Phil Gk*, 40, note a: Zeus, *Dikē*, to *Phon*, Logos: *varia nomina, res non diversa* . . . *pyraeizoon, unde manat omnis motus, omnis vita, omnis intellectus*). Heracleitus never said that "all being was but a becoming" (p 384); he would have said this only of existence, not of being.

P 385: "The thing that can be thought. . ."; here Parmenides is speaking of *noein*, not of *gnome* as used by Heracleitus and Euripides (who expressly distinguishes *nous* as mortal from *gnome* as immortal). *Gnome* need not be of anything. With Euripides, *Helen* 1014-6; cf *BU IV.3.30* (in Hume, p 138 at t p).

Finally, the Pythagorean doctrine, identical with Vedanta, is best of all, I think, enunciated in Apollonius *Ep* 58 (to Valerius). As in Buddhism, the "reincarnation" of the individual "soul" is a doctrine only for laymen and beginners.

Very sincerely,

Henri Frankfort, Dorset, England.

*Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, see Bibliography.

Robert Ernest Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, 1931.

TO J. E. LODGE

November 7, 1932

My dear Lodge:

Many thanks for your letter. We do not find Indian texts saying that the world "is *maya*", but that the world is *moha-kalila*. In the same way I was trying to distinguish magic as means from the work of magic as production. I was not intending to bring in the identity of spectator and performer, but meant to retain their "rational"—not "real"—distinction. But even so, does not (or did not) the spectator think of the magician as making use of magic? And when the spectator does call the trick "magic", is not this always a conscious or unconscious ellipse for "work of magic"?

Very sincerely,

PS: So I should not like to render *maya* as "illusion"—it is *by maya* that *moha* is produced. *Moha* is illusion, subject to empirical observation.

J. E. Lodge, Curatory of the Freer Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., USA.

TO E. F. C. HULL

August 20, 1946

Dear Mr Hull:

Yours of August 12: in the first place, I agree in general with the tendency of your remarks on translation. Secondly, for the Buddhist material, I recommend that you get the help of Miss I. B. Horner, Secretary of the Pali Text Society (30 Dawson Place, London W2), with whom as a matter of fact I am already

collaborating in a book consisting of a selection of the Buddha's *logoi*, newly translated; and in any case translations of all the Buddhist material are available in the publications of the Pali Text Society itself, though it would be better to have them revised, so that I would rely on Dr Horner, who is a most competent scholar in this field. Thirdly, I trust you will not repeat Misch's barbarous spellings of Indian names but adhere to the international rules (as to which, also, Dr Horner would be able to aid you). Fourthly, I am now 69 and have more than enough work in hand to last me another 25 years, if that were available, and I have to refuse all sorts of invitations to undertake anything else. Yeats' version of the Upanishads is negligible; he knew no Sanskrit and his assistant knew no English of the kind required; I regard such undertakings as impertinent. Hume's *Thirteen Principle Upanishads* is by no means consistently reliable, all scholars are agreed. In my opinion the versions in W. R. Teape's *Secret Lore of India* are the truest; but they are hardly as literal as you may require. Of the *Bhagavad Gita*, there must be over 20 versions in English; the best are, in one kind, Edwin Arnold's, and in another, that by Bhagavan Das and Annie Besant. In all matters of procuring books, Luzac (46 Great Russell Street, London W. C. 1) would be your best source.

I do think that I *am* perhaps as competent as anyone you could find to provide you with versions of texts from the Upanishads. For the texts from the SBE volumes XXXIV (and XXXVIII), I think you might take Thibaut's existing versions as they stand, not that they are incapable of improvement altogether, but he is a good scholar and the versions are for the most part excellent. This leaves me somewhat tempted to try and do the pieces from B G and the Upanishads, I should not want to do the Samkhya texts with which I am less familiar; and the B G and the Upanishads are daily reading for me. If you are not in too great a hurry I might agree to "help" to this extent.

Re the spellings: it would be desirable for your printer to be equipped with the diacritical marks and, as I said, to adhere to the forms on which there is international agreement (these can be seen, for example, in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 74 Grosvenor St, London). Such spellings as *Vinaja* (side by side with *Nikaya*) are absurd; they should be *Vinaya* and *Nikaya*.



*Njaja* should be *Nyāya*; *Tschandooja* should be *Chādogya*; *Brihadaranjaka* should be *Brhadāranyaka*; and so on.\*

Even to do what I offer, I should be glad to have the original book. I presume the publisher would be willing to make some payment for the work, and that I should ultimately receive a copy of the volume as translated.

Very sincerely,

\* We have not strictly followed Dr Coomaraswamy's well founded preferences in this matter of diacriticals in Sanskrit, Pali and Greek words that appear in the pages of this volume because of the constraints of time, talent and type faces.

Mr R. F. C. Hull, Thaxted, Essex, England, was translating Georg Misch's *Der Weg in die Philosophie* (B. G. Teubner, 1926), which consisted of a great many quotations from the Hindu and Buddhists Scriptures, and had written to obtain help in clarifying several passages.

*The Living Thoughts of Gautama the Buddha*, presented by Ananda K Coomaraswamy and I. B. Horner, London, 1984; see bibliography.

TO R. F. C. HULL

August 30, 1946

Dear Mr Hull:

I have yours of the 24th. I meant to say that I would do the few pieces from the *Bhagavad Gita* also, so please send list of these. It is still my intention to do the Upanishad pieces before Christmas, but I have no free time before mid-October.

Teape is obtainable from Blackwell, Oxford, and also, I think, from Heffer, Cambridge, but try Blackwell first (7/6 with the Supplement). Teape is unquestionably literary. I don't agree that Yeats is so consistently.

As regards the two *Rgveda* hymns: I have a learned friend here who is making the RV his life work, and is thoroughly competent both from the linguistic and the literary point of view. If you will write to him directly (Dr Murray Fowler, c/o Prof B. Rowland, 154 Brattle St, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA) merely explaining that they are for a translation of Misch's book and that you are writing at my suggestion, I am sure he could do them for you within a month.



Coomaraswamy's study in his home at Needham, Massachusetts



Incidentally, of course, Deussen's *Sechszig Upanishads* would be available in any good library, and so would Teape be, eg, at the Royal Asiatic Society (where you could mention my name by way of introduction, though it is hardly needed). There, also, you could use all the Pali Text Society volumes (their own stock was destroyed by a bomb).

The *Nidānakathā* passage Miss Horner could do, or you can take it from Rhys Davids' *Buddhist Stories*, London, Trubner, 1880.

In case you cannot use all the proper diacritics, the two important points would be to spell correctly and to distinguish the short and long vowels (a and ā, etc). In this case it would be permissible to use sh for ś, but it would still be desirable to distinguish ś, and I think most printers could do this.

Very sincerely,

R. F. C. Hull, as above.

TO R. F. C. HULL

August 30, 1946

Dear Mr Hull:

I was tempted to do a specimen for you from *KU*. In citing from the *Upanishads*, I find I hardly ever make an identical version; in any case, I work directly from the text, choosing words very carefully and bearing in mind the many parallel passages. I have tried to translate for those who will not have the background of comparative knowledge. But it must be realized that to get the full content of a text a Commentary is often really needed. For example, in *KU* 15, the "Jaws of death" are one form of the Symplegades, *Janua Coeli*; in IV.1, the "inverted version" (for which Plato has numerous parallels) corresponds to the "instaring" of Western mystics; in III.9 ff, of course, there is nothing unique in the use of the "chariot" symbolism, more familiar in Platonic contexts—and always a formula becomes the more comprehensible the more one becomes aware of its universality. But I suppose that Misch



points all this out, at least in the present contexts it is his affair to have done so.

I don't expect to do more until, as I said, mid-October; the difficulties are not in the Sanskrit, but in finding the right words with which to carry over as much as possible of the meaning without obscurity. In III.13, I used "oblate", because the original verb throughout (*śam*) is literally to "sacrifice", "give the quietus", and this is lost for all but philologists; if one speaks of the "peaceful Self", where "dedicated" or "immolated" would be nearer, the "Self of the self" or "selfless Self" is meant. Nevertheless, I think "oblate" is too recondite for present purposes, so I would render *KU* IV.13:

Stilling in the mind all speech, the knowledge.  
 should still the mind itself in the gnostic self (the reason)  
 The Gnostic is the Great, and the Great self is the  
 Self at peace.

Here are some other parts of the *Katha Upanishad*:

- (3) Know thou that the Spirit is the rider in the "chariot",  
 the "chariot", the body:  
 Know that Reason is its fellow, Mind it is that holds  
 the reins.
- (4) The powers of the soul are the steeds, as they say; the  
 objects of perception, their pasture.  
 The Spirit combined with the mind and its powers,  
 men of discernment term "the experiment".

(NB: It is a pity that we have no word corresponding to "fruition" and meaning "one who has fruition of".)

*Katha* . . . III.9–15:

- (9) He, indeed, whose discernment is that of the fellow-rider,  
 one whose mind has the reins in hand—  
 He reached the end of the track, the place of Vishnu's  
 ultimate stride.
- (10) Above the powers of the soul are their aims, above  
 these aims is the mind,  
 Above the mind, the reason, and above the reason  
 the Great Self (or Spirit)
- (11) Above the Great is the Unrevealed, and thereabove  
 the Person,

- Beyond whom there is naught whatever: that is the goal-post,  
that the end of the track.
- (12) The light of the Spirit by all things hidden is not  
apparent,  
Yet it is seen by the sharp and subtle eye of reason,  
by subtle seers,
- (13) Oblating speech in the mind, the knowledgable man should  
then oblate the mind in the gnostic self (the reason),  
The gnostic in the Great, and the Great Self in the Oblate  
Self.
- (14) Stand up! Awake! Win ye worths, and understand them—  
The sharpened edge of a razor, hard to overpass, a difficult  
path—word of the poets, this.
- (15) Soundless, untouchable, unshapen, unchanging, yes, and  
tasteless, eternal, scentless too,  
Without beginning or end, beyond the Great, immovable—  
whereon intent, one evades the jaws of death.

*Katha* . . . IV.1, 2:

- (1) The Self-subsistent pierced the orifices outwards, therefore  
it is that one looks forth, not at the Self within:  
Yet the Contemplative, seeking the Undying, with inverted  
vision, saw *Himself*.
- (2) Children are they that follow after external loves, they walk  
into the widespread snare of death;  
But the Contemplatives, knowing the Undying, look not for  
th'immovable amongst things mobile here.

*Katha* . . . V.8–12:

- (8) He who wakes in them that sleep, the Person who fashions  
manifold loves,  
He indeed is the Bright One, that is Brahma, called the  
Undying;  
On whom the worlds depend; *that* no one soever transcends—  
This verily, is *That*.
- (9) As it is one Fire that indwells the world, and assumes the  
semblance of every appearance,  
So the Inner Self of all beings assumes the semblance  
of every appearance, and is yet apart from all.
- (10) At it is the one Gale that indwells the world, and assumes  
the semblance of every appearance,  
So the one Inner Self of all beings assumes the semblance  
of every appearance, and is yet apart from all.

- (11) As the Sun, the whole world's eye, is unstained by the outward faults of what he sees,  
So the Inner Self of all beings is unstained by the ills of the world, being apart from them.
- (12) The Inner Self of all beings, who makes his one form to be many,  
Those who perceive Him within them, these, the Contemplatives, theirs' and none others' is everlasting felicity.

*Katha* . . . VI. 12, 13:

- (12) Neither by words nor by the mind, nor by vision can He be known;  
How can He be known but by saying that "HE IS"?
- (13) He can indeed be known by the thought "HE IS", and by the truth of both his natures;  
For whom He is known by the thought "HE IS", then His true nature presents itself.

*KU*, in the letter above = *Katha Upanishad*.

TO R. F. C. HULL

September 26, 1946

Dear Mr Hull:

Brahma and Brahman are both legitimate, but I prefer the nominative form, Brahma: the important distinction is from the masculine *Brahmā*.

For Greek, Cornford is, of course, all right; Jowett is perfectly acceptable, but has a slightly Victorian flavour. In general I use the Loeb Library versions, which are not always perfect, but good on the whole. I also use the Loeb Library version of Aristotle. The title of J. Burnet's book is *Early Greek Philosophy*. In the case of any difficulty it should be easy to get the advice of some Greek scholar in England.

In general, *Sūtras* are texts; *Kārkiās* rather of the nature of commentaries, in verse.

I shall be glad to read the Brahman-Atman passages you refer to. The only translation of Vācaspati Misra's *Sāmkhya-Tattva-Kaumudi* I know of is that by Ganganatha Jha, Bombay



Theosophical Society Publishing Fund, 1986; you could probably find a copy at the Royal Asiatic Society or at the British Museum. There is also a German version by Garbo in *Abh Bayerischen Akad Wiss Phil Kl*, 19.3 (1892). For Vijnana Bhiksu, see J. R. Ballantyne, *Samkhya Aphorisms of Kapila* in Trubner's Oriental Series (1885). For Narayana Tirtha (sic) see S. C. Banerji, *Samkhya Philosophy*, Calcutta, 1898. For Sankhya books in greater detail, see list in the Union List . . . (American Oriental Series, No 7, 1935, Nos 2513ff.

I am using a borrowed typewriter, excuse results.

Very sincerely,

R. F. C. Hull, as above.

TO R. F. C. HULL

October 18, 1946

Dear Mr Hull:

In the first place, I am sending you my RV X.90.1 which may give you some help on the general psychological background.

2) Your passage, "This is perfect . . . (Yeats p 159): the reference is to BU 5.1. The word he renders by "perfect" is *pūrṇam*, which means "pleroma", or as Hume has it, "fulness"; "perfect" may be true, but it is not the meaning of the text. Root in *pūrṇam* is *pr*, "fill", same root as in "pleroma".

3) I shall make some necessary spelling corrections on the Ms; notably, Yājñavalkya for Yadnavalkya throughout.

4) As regards your main question, I shall append my proposed translation of BU IV.1.2. "Not beyond our ken" in the original is literally *aparokṣa*, "not out of sight", "eye to eye" ie, "face to face", *coram*; cf in my RV paper, note 12, esp *Taitt Up* 1.12, where *pratyakṣam* = *sāksāt* (*pratyakṣam*, literally, "against the eye"—hence "eye to eye"). Such immediate vision applies in the first place to the perception of ordinary "objects" and contrasts with *parokṣam*, "out of sight" (the word *akṣa*, "eye", being present in all three words), which last applies to all that has to do with the (invisible) Gods, who are said to be

*priva*, "fond of, or wanted to, the ob-scure", Cf Chapter V of my *Transformation of Nature in Art*.

Now the translation:

"Then U, the son of Cakra, asked him: 'Yājñavalkya', he said, 'demonstrate (or make known) to me the B[rahma]. Brahma face to face, not out of sight (*sāksat-aparoksat*)". "He is your Self that is within all things." "But, Yājñavalkya, which 'self' is it that is 'in all things'?" "That which breathes together with the breath (*prāṇa*) is both yourself and all-within. That which breathes (or expires when you expire) out with your breathing out (*apāna*) is your Self and all-within. That which distributively breathes with your distributive breath (*vyāna*) is your Self and all-within. That which breathes with your distributive breath (*vyāna*) is your Self and all-within. That which breathes upward (or aspires) with your breathing upward (*udāna*) is your Self and all-within.'

Yājña is perfectly correct; the Brahma is manifested only by its vital functions (*prāṇa*, often explicitly = *ayus*, "life"); all the vital and sensitive functions of the psyche are extensions of the Spirit, Self, or Soul of the soul, thought of as seated at the centre of our being and in all beings. In the next part, U objects that Y has only referred to various aspects of the G, just as if one were asked what an animal is, and told only "for example, cows and horses"—which answer does not tell us what an animal as such is. Y explains that the B of Ā is not an object that can be known by a subject. . . . So, 2) U, the son of C, said "you have expressed it, as one might say yonder cow, or yonder horse. (Again, I ask), demonstrate to me the B[rahman], not out of sight—who is the Self within all things." (Y repeats) "He is your Self, the all-within. You cannot see the seer of seeing, or hear the hearer of hearing, or think the thinker of thought, or discriminate the discriminator. For He is your Self, the all-within; all else is a misery." "Thereat, U, son of C, desisted."

The unknowability of the Self is often insisted upon—as also by Jung, who points out that only the Ego can be known objectively; the eye cannot see itself, and so it is with the universal Subject. I have read Sankara's commentary and made my version as literal as possible, without thinking of anything that Misch says.

I don't see that Misch is far off the mark, but he does seem to attribute to U what is really Y's doctrine (and the common



one), viz, that the functions of life are the manifestations of B, and it is this mistake (which I think you should regard as a *lapsus linguae* to be corrected) that makes Misch's account confusing to me. Moreover, I would not say "was reduced to the identification of the various vital functions"; B is *manifested* in these functions, not "reduced" to them. For this epiphany otherwise formulated, see *Kaush Up* II.12.13 (Hume, pp 316, 317) and cf *BU* I.5.21 (ibid, p 91). Perhaps you had best let me know how far all this meets your difficulty, before I try to go into it any further, if needed. In any case, I shall regard the translation of *BU* 4.1.2 as done. I might add that the "Breath" (*prāṇa*) is repeatedly a tremendous concept, not merely a *flatus*, but an immanent principle equated with the Sun, Self, Brahma, Indra, etc. On the "Breaths", see also note 29, 2nd para, in my RV paper.

Very sincerely,

R. F. C. Hull, as above.

'RV X. 90.1: *aty atisthad daśāṅgulam*', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXVI, 1946, no 2.

*Kaush UP* = *Kaushitaki Upanishad*

*BU* = *Brhādaranyaka Upanishad*

TO MISS I. B. HORNER

14 May 1947

Dear Miss Horner:

*Brahma-khetta*, cf *Buddha-khetta*, *Vism* 414; also, *Vism* 220 *punna-khetta*=*brahma-khetta*. In *Sn* 524 I think *brahma-khetta*=*brahma-loka* as distinct from *Indra-loka*, and perhaps we should understand Brahma. The *khetta-jina* is one who is no longer concerned with any "fields", having mastered and done with all. *Khetta-bandhana* is attached to or connection with any "field" and=*samyoga*; to see this read BG 13.26. All three fields are spheres of *samsara*, and the *khetta-jina* is one who has done [with] them all, and has made the *uttara-nissaranam*. Is this adequate?

*Thag* 533, *taya*, must be ablative or instr., neither of which seems to justify "in", so I would think "for thee" better than



"in thee". Of course, *saccanamo*, as elsewhere, is "whose name is Truth", not "in very Truth", for which one would expect simply *saccam* at the beginning of the sentence, just as *satyam* is used to mean "verily".

By the way, J IV. 127, *attanam attano* is interesting, and must mean "Self of the self", as in MU 6.7, *atmano'tma*.

I wouldn't like "used up" for *nibbuto*. One good sense would be "dowsed". By the way, cf *Oratio ad Graecos...*, "O teaching that quenches the fire within the soul."

Kindest regards,

PS: With *Vin* 1.34: *jivha addita* cf James iii, 6: "The tongue is a fire and setteth afire the wheel of becoming."

Miss I. B. Horner, Secretary of the Pali Text Society and a well known scholar living in London. She collaborated with AKC in *The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha*, London, 1948.

Vism = *Visuddhimaga*

Sn = *Suttanipata*

Thag = *Theragatha*

J = *Jataka*

Vin = *Vinaya-Pitaka*

The above are Pali texts, the language of Hinaya Buddhism.

TO MISS I. B. HORNER

Date uncertain

Dear Miss Horner:

Re self-naughting: this is the same as *Self*-realisation. *Abhinibbut'atto* (= *abhinibbout' attana atta*) but the *atta* referred to is not the same! In fact, *nibbuto* applies only to self and *vimutto* to Self. If the B[uddha] is *nibbuto* this does not mean that *he* is extinguished, but that he is *abhinibbut'atto*, one in whom *self* has been totally extinguished; he is therefore *sitibhuto*.

"He that would save his soul, let him lose it." "He who would follow me, *denegat seipsum*" (not an ethical but an ontological demand). "All scripture cries aloud for freedom from self." So in Islam, as God says to the man at the door, "Who's there?" "I". "Begone. No room for two here." All this

is quite universal and not in the least peculiar to Buddhism.

D II.120 *katam me saranam attano*; this *atta* certainly not the *maranadhammo atto* (M. I. 167), only the former is the *saruppam attano* of Sn 368. The great error is to see *attam anattani*, "Self in what-is-not-Self", (NB: I am *very* careful with my *s* and *S*), eg, in the *sabbe dhamma anatta*. . .

AKC

Miss I. B. Horner, as above.

TO MISS I. B. HORNER

June 24, 1946

Dear Miss Horner:

*Appamada*: lit, absence of infatuation, intoxication (mad), pride, etc, implies diligence, no doubt, but diligence is hardly a translation, is it? Yours of June 21. I'm glad we agree on several points. I think we had better keep *ariyan*—"worthy" would be good in itself, but would not convey what is needed. Regarding *samaya* and *asamaya*, I'm very sure that your "unstable" and "stable" are good in themselves (whether or not in every context): this would fit in *very* well with *khana*, where alone true *thiti* can be found—*khana*, strictly speaking is that in which a thing is *in-stant*, eg, as *arahat paramgato thale titthati*.

AKC,

Miss I. B. Horner, as above.

TO MISS I. B. HORNER

July 2, 1946

Dear Miss Horner:

I have yours of 9th and 20th and an undated one with "Householders". I'm in such a position, too, that I can hardly find another minute to give! Anyhow, final decisions on renderings must be yours: it is good that we are agreed on



many of them, eg, *metta*, love. To be sure *Bhagavata* is a word common to other religions, especially early Vaisnavism contemporary with the great *Nikayas*—and this too must be taken into consideration in connection with the great importance attached to *bhatti* = *bhakti* in the sense of devoted service; “beneficent” or “generous” seems to be the real meaning of *Bhagavat*—or “wealthy dispenser”. Perhaps you are right in retaining “lord”, though it is a paraphrase rather than a translation. . . *Viriya* seems to me that “Doctrine of energy” implying (as often stated in other words) that “manly effort must be made”. *Kammavada*, “doctrine that there is an ought to be done.” *Sanditthika* and *ditth' eva dhamme* seem to me both = “here and now”—or one might differentiate by saying “immediate” for the first. I do think it important to render *khana* by “moment” or “instant”.

(Incidentally, Macdonald in *Isis*, writing on the Islamic doctrine of the *moment* suggests a Buddhist origin for it; but I find more Greek sources also, than he does.)

*Pamada* is something like “elevation” in the way one can call a drunk person “elevated”, but probably “temperance” and “intemperance” are the best words to use. It is a pity that there is no literal opposite of “infatuation”.

The whole problem of *nirvana*, etc, is very hard: one should always bear in mind the desirability of using renderings that are not incompatible with the putting out of a fire, which was certainly the dominant content for a Buddhist.

Certainly, *-jo* and *-nimmito* are more or less equivalent terms: one = *genitus*, the other = *factus*; both apply to *production*. Perhaps “formed” would be best for *-nimmito*—“formed by”, or even “moulded by”; *-jo*, more literally, “begotten of”. The idea that the pupil is reborn of his teacher is common. *Viraga*: I'm willing to accept “aversion”. Skr *vairaga* is really *contemptus mundi*. For *gocara*, “field” would do for psychological contexts.

*Ajjhattam* and *paccattam* seem to me nearly the same: perhaps “inwardly” rather than “subjectively” which has a slightly different value—or as you say “personally”, with application to *one's own* experience. . . .

*Ariya* is difficult unless one says just “Aryan”, but that would need reservations; when Eckhart says “the fastidious soul can rest on nothing that has name”, that is the meaning—the notion is of an elite. . . .



I agree to *de-* (or *dis-*) becoming for *vibhava*; but it is difficult, too, because *de-becoming* (*ent werden*) is elsewhere the great desideratum, to have *ceased to become* = *nibbana*; therefore, *vibhava* really implies, I think, “becoming-other”—the two together = equal “becoming (thus) or not becoming (thus).”

That is all I can do now!

AKC

Miss I. B. Horner, as above.

TO MISS I. B. HORNER

July 26, 1946

Dear Miss Horner:

For *nibbanam* and the verb, I would not object to “quenching” (as in *Vism* 306, of the fire of anger); this would correlate well with “cooling” for *sitibhava*. In fact, *parinibbuto sitibhuto* as “quenched and cooled” seems pretty good.

AKC

Miss I. B. Horner, as above.

TO GEORGE SARTON

November 9, 1944

Dear Sarton:

I enclose some Addenda for “Gradation and Evolution II”.

As to the critique of Northrup’s article, I found it better, and even necessary, to rewrite the letter in the form of a review in which I also briefly allude to the other parts of the book in which his essay appears. I’ll send this to you soon, and then you can pass it on.

Cordially,

PS: I just received Edgerton's *Bhagavad Gita* (HOS 38 & 39). I am rather appalled by the spectacle of a scholar who confesses ignorance of and lack of interest in metaphysics, and yet undertakes such a task. However good his scholarship, he has hardly any more understanding of what is being talked about than Whitney of the *Atharva Veda*. It is works like these that have led some Indian scholars to speak of European scholarship as a "crime"!

George Sarton, professor of the history of science, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

'Gradation and Evolution, II', *Isis*, XXXVIII, 1947, numbers 111 and 112. Franklin Edgerton translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Harvard Oriental Series, Numbers 111 and 112.

W. D. Whitney, *Atharva-Veda Samhita*, Harvard Oriental Series, No 7.

TO GEORGE SARTON

November 4, (year uncertain)

My dear Sarton:

Apropos of our discussion of spoken languages. Cf Keith in *Aitareya Aranyaka*, Oxford, 1909, p 196, no 19. Sanskrit can only have been a vernacular very long ago (say before 800 B C). Later, the educated classes used a Prakrit for every day purposes, though still understanding Sanskrit, which was partially understood even by peasants (as now). Sanskrit is still sufficiently widely known that some European scholars travelling in India could use it as a *lingua franca*. I take it modern Greek is nearer to ancient Greek than Hindi is to Sanskrit.

AKC

George Sarton, professor of the history of science, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

TO MRS C. MORGAN

Date uncertain

Dear Mrs Morgan:

When you first spoke of "stages" I thought you had in mind the successive levels of reference or stages of being attained in contemplative practice. For stages in the progress of the individual, I suggest G. I. Wade, *Thomas Traherne* (Princeton, 1944), cf pp 52, 53 and 62, 64.

At the university . . . I saw that there were things in this world of which I had never dreamed; glorious secrets and glorious persons past imagination. . . . Nevertheless, some things were defective, too. There was never a tutor that did profess to teach Felicity, though that be the mistress of all other sciences. Nor did any of us study these things but as *aliens*, which we ought to have studied as our own enjoyments. We studied to inform our knowledge, but knew not for what end we so studied. And for lack of aiming at a certain end we erred in the manner.

Later Traherne realized that:

Outward things . . . lay so well, methought, that they could not be mended: but I must be mended to enjoy them.

Wade adds:

That mending, that purification of the will, constitutes the spiritual history of the next ten years.

In that growth a large part of the means was certainly Plato, Plotinus, Hermes. "Searching the Scriptures" is a *liberating* procedure; one learns to think, not "for oneself", but correctly, which is better.

For the Kundalini, about which you enquired: cf Avalon, *The Serpent Power*, Luzac, 1919.

Further for "stages" the following might be useful: John Cordelier, *The Spiral Way, Meditations upon the Fifteen Mysteries of the Soul's Ascent* (Watkins, London, 1922) and perhaps Dietrich von Hilderbrand, *Liturgy and Personality* (Longmans Green, N Y, 1943).



Other references include Fritz Marti, "Religion, Philosophy and the College", in *Review of Religion*, VII, 1942, 3; J. A. Stewart, *The Myths of Plato* (Macmillan, N Y, 1905); N. K. Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy* (Cambridge, 1942); Avalon, *Shakti and Shakta* (Luzac); and Swami Nikhilananda, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, N. Y., 1942).

It is just because what we are after is hardly to be found "in Newburyport" that one must read and read; it can be found in the living books, which are available even here and now.

This is all I can think of at the moment. We enjoyed your visit very much.

Very sincerely,

Mrs C. Morgan, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

TO MURRAY FOWLER

March 4, 1944

Dear Murray:

I read your review with pleasure. I can only promise to think about the "love" and "ethic" problem. One would have to start from the question, what is the true object of love? One could show that the Upanishads, Aristotle and Aquinas agree that it is our "Self" (if we know "which self"); and that the same is implicit in "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto these, ye have done it unto Me". Altruism, the love of "others" as such is as much as the hatred of "others" a delusion. Even if we submit to this delusion of "others", our love for them should be founded in our love of the One.

As for "ethics", one would have to show that, as for Plato, there is no real distinction of "ethics" from "politics".

As for the other point, *sannyasa*: this corresponds to the Pauline distinction of *liberty* from *law*. I think I made it clear that a complete society must recognize that the *final* end of the individual is one of deliverance from his obligations; although an end that can only be *approached* by a fulfilment of them. Cf Edgerton in JAOS 62.152, recognizing the *ordinary*

and the *extraordinary* norms. The very concepts of finite and infinite necessitate both. . . .

Kindest regards,

PS: I take it that the true doctrine of inaction is *not* to do nothing, but to "act without acting"; as in the Chinese doctrine of *wu wei*.

Murray Fowler, Madison, Wisconsin, USA, friend of Dr Coomaraswamy and lifelong student of the *Rig Veda*.

TO GEORGE SARTON

February 6, 1945

Dear Sarton:

I did not know of Datta's change of life (which is one way of referring to that kind of retirement). The word *Saha* must have been either *sādhu* or *sannyāsin* (the former literally "hitting the mark", the latter "giving up", ie, surrendering all duties and rights). This represents the "4th stage" or the normal Indian schema of life (and also corresponds to Plato's concept of man's latter days, *Rep* 498, C, D . . .). *Sannyāsin* is pretty near to what Eckhart calls a "truly poor man". On the *ghāts* at Benares you will find amongst others, university graduates and ex-millionaires, now "truly poor men" owning nothing. By the way, too, there are 4 American *sādhus* in India; my wife knew one of them and he was a good friend of our boy's. . . . As a rule, the funeral rites are performed for a man who becomes a *sannyāsin*; he becomes in fact what Rumi calls a "dead man walking"; cf Angelus Silesius, *stirb ehe du stirbst*. We ourselves, in fact, in a few years more, plan to return to India to approximate, as far as it is practicable for us, to this ideal. In India, one does not look forward to an old age of economic independence but to one of independence of economics. There are many humbugs in India, but as one *sādhu* said to my wife, as long as there are even 2 real *sādhus* in 100, so long there will be an India.

Did I commend to you M. Beck's "Science in Education" in *Modern Schoolman*, Jan 1945?

I have a number of things in the press that will interest you. I am still working on the "Early Iconography of Sagittarius", but am almost bogged down in the mass of material (cherubs, centuars, Janua Coeli, Rape of Soma, etc); and on the concept of Ether in the Greek and Sanskrit sources.

Perhaps we shall see you at the Pelliot tea tomorrow.

Kindest regards,

PS: You will find an old account of a man becoming a *Sannyāsin* in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* XI.4.1 (in Hume will do), in which the *Atman* (Hume's "Soul") is the Common Man whom we have *now* reduced to the dimensions of Tom, Dick, and Harry, and whose legitimate title of *Fuehrer* has now been given to tyrants!

George Sarton, professor of the history of science, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

'Early Iconography of Sagittarius' was incomplete at the time of AKC's death and has not been published.

TO MRS NORBERT WEINER

December 14, 1945

Dear Mrs Weiner:

This is just a line to improve upon what I was trying to say the other evening. I quite agree that we have to put our own fires out, and ought to help our neighbour when his house is on fire. But in *either* case, such activities are distractions from our own proper work; and the real point is that "helping others" directly is not a vocation, and that we have no right to make a business of it. We ought to have our own work to do, and devote our energies to it, with only such interruptions as are inevitable when they arise; we certainly ought not to look for occasions that call upon our time, but only ought to attend to them when we are naturally made aware of them.

Very sincerely,



Mrs Norbert Wiener, wife of Norbert Wiener, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, and author of the popular book that philosophized about the dawn of the computer age, *Cybernetics*.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

January 13, 1938

Sir,

Apropos of various Articles in recent issues of the *New English Weekly*, it seems to me that what we need is *not* an emphasis on Christian ethics, goodwill, etc. What we need is the revival of Christian dogma. (This is precisely where the East is of use and help—I have even been told by Catholics that my own work has given them renewed confidence, which is just the effect it *should* have.) . . . Ethics have *no power of their own* to bring about peace or justice or even to hold their own in theory; they have become mere sentiment and will do little or nothing to better the world. With a revival of dogma you will have a new life put into both making and doing (art and prudence). We may then once more learn to act, not “prettily”, but “correctly”. If people would only treat prudence as they do mathematics: a matter of right or wrong, not from “feeling”, but in the same sense that  $2+2 = 4$ , and not 5!

AKC

TO PAUL HANLEY FURFEY, S.J.

February 2, 1938

Dear Professor Furfey:

Enclosed may interest you. I should mention it is an extract from a private letter, published without permission, hence its colloquial style.

Very sincerely,

PS: Still, I feel the point about dogma is important, and that

conduct should be *first* a matter of *order* and *secondly* a matter of the will (will following the intellect).

Paul Henley Furfey, S. J., department of sociology, Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., USA.

The previous letter was enclosed; it had been sent to the editor of *The New English Weekly*, a personal friend of AKC, and was published by him despite the fact that it was part of a personal letter.

TO GEORGE SARTON

October 14, 1938

Dear Sarton:

Many thanks for your interesting leaflets. I only rather demur to the idea of "individual conscience", since I cannot but regard the "conscience" (the word of course originally meant "consciousness", an awareness) as "impersonal"—in the sense that the "active intellect" is for some Schoolmen impersonal and that Synteresis is impersonal and the Vedic "Inner Controller", the Platonic and neo-Platonic *hegemon*, viz, the Spirit of God within you.

Further, I believe good will can only be [universalized]\* insofar as the good will is made to rest on strictly intellectual (metaphysical) sanctions, so conduct is regulated by knowledge rather than by opinion-feeling. A consent of East and West can only proceed from this highest ground and must *first* of all (as Guénon says) therefore be the work of an elite.

Very sincerely,

\* The word "universalized" is supplied because of the illegibility of the text, but it complements and does not contradict the context of the letter.

George Sarton, professor of the history of science, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

TO GEORGE SARTON

July 13, 1947

Dear Sarton:

Your birthday book is full of interest. Buffon's *tout ce qui peut être, est* is very good philosophy. Leake's paragraph 3 on page 264 is quite ridiculous—not only as if anyone ever did anything without a view to some result to be secured or avoided, but also he does not realise that the whole business of doing unto others rests upon the question *Who am I?*, and *Who are you?* And again he knows nothing of the contexts (people are so glib in citing Indian terms and ideas secondhand!), or of such contexts as the Buddha's "Whoever would nurse *me*, let him nurse the sick". . . .

Quite another point: I find it of the highest interest that Dante (in *De Monarchia*) uses "God and Nature" with a singular verb—as if the expression were a grammatical dual denoting a *mixta persona* ("not that the one is two, but that the two are one", as Hermes says). This is a survival of the oldest meanings. . . ., those of the early Greek "physicists", and one that can be continuously traced thereafter, side by side with the other meaning (that of *natura naturata*).

Kindest regards,

George Sarton, as on p. 274.

TO MEYER SCHAPIRO

May 2, 1932

Dear Professor Schapiro:

On rereading your letter it occurs to me to add one thing to mine. You speak of the values of contemplation being detached from those of daily use. To my mind, speculation about a kind of truth conceived to exist *in vacuo* is nothing but "curiosity"; moreover, it goes for me that the ultimate truth is precisely and by definition that which cannot be known. However, so far as the best sort of relative truth goes, and apart from my own



views, I would say that in India we have no philosophy pursued as such for its own sake, for the sole purpose of constructing a network of words that shall be as far as possible unassailable. Indians have sometimes said with perfect justice that European students *cannot* understand Indian philosophy (or as it ought rather to be called, *metaphysics*) because they do not live it. Indian metaphysics is in origin a means to power, in development becoming means to the *summum bonum*; it is never an end in itself. On this see Guénon, *L'Homme et son devenir selon le Védānta* (Paris, 1924 [and numerous subsequent editions]). So we shall not get anywhere as to understanding the East if we start from an idea of contemplation as a thing in and for its own sake; it is a means to becoming what we are, but there are other means concomittant and inseparable. Of course, in saying "means", I speak empirically—there are no means to enlightenment (perfection), to a thing of which we are already possessed, but only means to the destruction of our unawareness of it, which unawareness is our "imperfection".

Very sincerely,

Dr Meyer Schapiro, professor of art history, Columbia University, New York.

TO THE ART BULLETIN

Date uncertain

Sir:

In Professor Schapiro's review of the *Survey of Persian Art* in the March\* issue of the *Art Bulletin*, I sympathize with his criticisms of the Editor's tendency to isolate and exalt Persian art from and above all others. But when he says that "The renderings of terror and rage would be as unlikely here . . .", and that "the rigid hands of the archaic statues were not representations of psychological states, but characteristics of a style", in the words of Apollonius of Tyana, "simply the style of the ancients", false conclusions are implied. For there is no such thing as "simply the style": nothing happens by chance. The better we come to understand the *mind* of the ancients (I

find it more intelligible than the mind of the moderns), the more clearly we see that their "style" corresponds to this "mind". I say "mind" deliberately, because it is to the mind far more than to the feelings that art (and especially geometric art) is pertinent. All that Plato has to say about art is tantamount to praise of Greek archaic or even geometric art, and dispraise of Greek naturalistic art; while for Aristotle the representation of character in tragedy is still subordinate to that of action, ie, essence, since for him as for the ancients generally, the man is what he *does*.

Whether Professor Schapiro means to say that style is an "accident", or that a style is brought into being solely for "aesthetic" reasons, he is ignoring the fact that "the style is the man" (or group of men) and inevitably expresses their point of view, if it is not to be dismissed as an "artificial style", which would be rather ridiculous for the neolithic pottery painting. Style reveals essence; and if an archaic face is impassive, it means that those whose style this was, or rather those with whom this style originated, were "stoics" in this sense and that of the *Bhagavad Gita*, "able to stand up against pleasure and pain", and in this sense, although not in ours, "apathetic".

Moreover, is not Professor Schapiro confusing style with iconography? "Primitive" art is essentially an "imitation of the actions of the Gods and Heroes," and as Plato says in this connection, whoever would represent these invisible realities "truly" must have known "themselves as they really are." But nothing can be known except in the mode of the knower; to the extent that the Gods are man-made they "take the shapes that are imagined by their worshippers," and these are an index to the worshippers themselves. Nor must we forget that the body is traditionally an image of the soul, which is the *form* of the body; just as the shape of the work of art is determined by its form. Things such as facial expression and gesture are therefore significant of states of being, as is explicit in Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, III.10.8; where textual sources are available, as in India, these gestures are matters of prescription, not of taste, the intention being to conform the icon to its paradigm, so that there may be what Plato calls not so much "likeness" as an "adequate" representation. It is surely to all sculpture that the remarks of Socrates quoted by Xenophon, *Mem* III.10.6-8 apply: he concludes, "Then must not the menacing glance of



fighters be correctly represented, and the triumphant glance of victors imitated? Most assuredly. So then, the sculptor *is* able to represent in his images the activities of the soul." Unless we mean to stop short at the aesthetic surfaces of works of art, ignoring their content, it will not be enough to know the *what* of iconography, we must also understand its *why*. And in so far as the theme is mythical, as is notably the case in "primitive" works of art, this will mean a *reductio artium ad theologiam*, "a reference of the arts to theology."

AKC

★ The year was 1941, and this exchange appeared in volume XXIII of the *Art Bulletin*.

TO TREES (A BRITISH JOURNAL)

1945—date not specified further

*Mr Finlayson's Providential Order of Fairplay*

Mr Richard St Barbe Baker, whom I have had the good fortune to know personally, and whose own book, *Africa Drums*, I greatly admire, asks me to write a note on Mr Finlayson's *Providential Order of Fairplay*. This minimum, as he also calls it, is one of fairplay to earth, neighbour, and "(better) self". This "better self" is, for the philosopher or theologian at least, anything but "a rather vague term"; for this "Self of the self", the "self's immortal Leader", as we call it in India, is at once the "God of Socrates" and our "Common Man", the immanent deity, and it is to this Man and not to the average man (a statistical illusion, of much utility to demagogues and bankers) that the term "common" is properly applicable; it is to this Man in every man and woman, this Fühère, that obedience is primarily due. If only we had in mind a "century of this Common Man"!

Fairplay is a good enough word, although with rather too much the flavour of the "sporting instinct". I would prefer, without insisting upon, the rather more pregnant and more catholic term "Justice", Greek *dikaiosune*. This word is rendered by "righteousness", (. . . and all these things shall be



added unto you); but better by "justice" in most translations from other Greek sources. Why the seeking first of *this* Justice should involve (as it necessarily does) a provision for all human needs, will be understood if we presume that the connotation is that of Plato's definition, for whom Justice is "for every man to do what it is his to do, in accordance with his own nature", to "do what it is natural for him to do", or, more colloqually, "mind his own proper business". This is the definition of a vocational society and of "fairplay to neighbour".

Similarly, in India, where the word for Justice is *Dharma*: and this is *Dharma*, and the means of his own perfection, for everyman to fulfil his own share of justice, his *sva-dharma*, that function which is determined for him by his own nature and native endowment. This, in turn, is a statement of the principle of the nowadays so much misunderstood "caste system" in which, as the late A. M. Hocart (whose book *Les Castes* is the best on the subject), says *chaque occupation est une sacerdoce*—every *métier* a ministry, to which he adds that the feudal system, a system of personal relations and mutual loyalties, has only been painted in such dark colours because it is incompatible with an industrial organization where there are no personal relations and production is not for use but for profit. The caste or vocational forms of society, once universal (not only Indian), provided for all human needs, just because of the variety of human endowment ("It is the wealth and genius of variety among our people, both in character and kind, that needs to be rescued now"—the Earl of Portsmouth, *Alternatives to Death*, page 30) . . . , and by the same token, at the same time that it provided for every man's individual dignity, such societies represent the only true form of democracy, based upon the all-important concept of Equality, so much stressed by the Greeks. Modern democracies, on the other hand, so called, are forms of mob-rule, resulting only in a balance of power as between groups of competing *interests*—an entirely different conception from that of a government according to Justice or "Fairplay"—the exercise of power by one who rules "in his own interest". The conflict of interests in a modern democracy, so called, inevitably leads to a Dictatorship, ie, to the victory of the interest of some one class, whether Capitalist (as in Facism) or proletarian (as in a Soviet), cf Plato, *Laws* 700 ff.

This leads to the further consideration, almost always overlooked, that the Christian concept of a "Kingdom of God on earth" remains completely unintelligible for so long as we have no clear understanding, but only a prejudicial misconception of what was the Classical and Oriental theory of Kingship to which this expression refers, as to a well known pattern. The true King, like his divine prototype, is a viceroy, governing in nobody's private interest, whether his own or that of any one class, but according to Justice, or Equality ("I'm for Monarchy for the sake of Equality", as Goldsmith said). No King, for example, would permit such commercial exploitations of natural resources, no such a "rape of the earth" as is possible and perhaps inevitable in a so called democracy or state of "free enterprise", such as we call in India "the law of the sharks".

But here again, in speaking of Equality, we have to be careful. What the ancients, eg, Euripides or Philo, meant by "Equality", as the only true basis of polity, was not the arithmetical and egalitarian equality that is interpreted in a contempt of "aristocracy" and the boast that "I'm as good as you are", or the belief in the equal validity of everyone's opinions. The Classical Equality is not an arithmetical but a "proportionate" equality of exactly the same sort as that "proportion" that makes a symbol an "adequate" representation of its archetype, and it is this kind of Equality that corresponds to Justice as defined above. Rather than a government by counting all noses (a valid procedure only within groups, guilds or castes of similarly gifted men), the Classical Equality means "from each according to *his* ability, and to each according to *his* need".

One last word: the primary European exponent of Justice or Fairplay in this sense was Plato, who has nevertheless been freely accused of advocating a totalitarian or technocratic form of government. In two notable passages, on the contrary, Plato expressly lays it down that the capacity for justice is not, like that for particular sciences or arts, private to any individuals or classes of men, but accessible to all; and that it is for those who are really just men, and only for them, even if they are illiterate or in any other way devoid of technical training, to take part in government.

Until we are prepared to return from the notion of a government (whether internal or international) by a balance of



power, from the notion of the government of a minority by a majority, and from that of the government of colonies by self-styled "emperors", to a notion of government in terms of Justice, Equality or "Fairplay", we might as well abandon all hopes for a "better world". No "plans" will, of themselves, bring into being a better world; the creation of a kingdom of heaven on earth demands a change of heart, alike as regards our fellow men and that "nature" that we boast of "conquering", but have forgotten how to woo and win and live with.

AKC

H. G. D. Finlayson is not further identified. Similarly, his *Providential Order of Fairplay* could not be identified from any of the standard bibliographic tools, though the remark near the beginning of the letter suggests that it was a book or pamphlet. This communication from AKC (published in *Trees*, IX, 1945, no 2) is included here despite the unavailability of the original, because the sequence of letters that follow would be less meaningful without it.

Richard St Barbe Baker, *Africa Drums*, London, 1945.

A. M. Hocart, *Les Castes*; see Bibliography for English translation.

TO MR H. G. D. FINLAYSON

July 14, 1944

Dear Mr Finlayson:

Many thanks for your letter and enclosures. So far as I can tell from this rather brief material, I am fully in agreement with you on the "provident minimum of decency". Regarding "I AM", a good deal depends on all that we understand by this. But by your equation of the individual spiritual life with the cultivation of our "better self", I presume we see together. In my article "Sir Gawain . . ." in *Speculum* (Jan 1944), I pointed out that the true argument is not *Cogito ergo sum*, but *Cogito ergo Est*. However, I don't see my way at present to write anything specifically on the "minimum".

Regarding "cosmic stricture", I think Przyluski, *La Participation* might interest you. On the other hand, also Giono, *Letters aux paysans*.

Very sincerely,



H. G. D. Finlayson, as above.

"Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Indra and Namuci", *Speculum*, XIX, 1944.

J. Przyluski, *La Participation*.

Jean Giono, *Lettre aux paysans*.

TO MR H. G. D. FINLAYSON

Date uncertain, but presumably autumn 1944

Dear Mr Finlayson:

Many thanks for yours of August 22 (my 67th birthday). I certainly do not see anything in your "minimum" as defined in your "Statement of account". What you call the "charitable poise" seems to me much more actual in other religions than in Christianity, with its *Extra ecclesium nulla salus*; although, of course, this formula is not to be taken literally, Christian theology recognizing a "baptism of the spirit" as well as the "baptism of water". I don't think you need be afraid of any spread of interest in Comparative Religion, but only of a wrong approach to the subject. The fact of the universal enunciation of the fundamental doctrines, often in almost the same idioms, is actually very impressive; this universality deriving from the Perennial Philosophy on which all religions ultimately rest. I think the recent paper on "The Only Transmigrant" would interest you as it deals with the divine immanence as the only real basis of agreement

Very sincerely,

H. G. D. Finlayson, as above.

"On the One and Only Transmigrant", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXIV, Supplement 3, 1944.

TO H. G. D. FINLAYSON

November 2, 1944

Dear Mr Finlayson:

I think you would be interested in Prof F. W. Buckler's

writing on the Kingdom of God on Earth and the direct development of this subject from the doctrine of kingship, apart from which the notion of the Kingdom on Earth *cannot be understood*. Of these writings, the most easily available is *the Epiphany of the Cross* (Heffer, Cambridge, England).

Regarding tolerance and charity, John I would seem to support that the "baptism of the spirit" is superior to "the baptism of water", as one would naturally suppose. The latter is equivalent to initiatory rebirth and has its equivalents in the initiations of other religions, eg, the *Upanayana* by which the Brahman by birth becomes a Brahman in fact.

Very sincerely,

H. G. D. Finlayson, as above.

F. W. Buckler, cf page 72.

TO H. G. D. FINLAYSON

December 22, 1944

Dear Mr Finlayson:

Common duty: in the first place I would say that the original reference of the expression *Homo communis* was to the Son of Man immanent in every man, and it is only in this sense that I like to use the expression "common man"; the egalitarian and democratic sense being only that of a man so "common" that he can be said to come in carloads. By the same token, the question of the "better self" and of true "self love" as commended by Aristotle, Aquinas, and in the Upanishads—see the JAOS Supplement 3 (which I sent you), page 41, note 82. All traditional sources are in agreement that the prime necessity is to "know Thyself", ie, which of "the two that dwell together in us" is our real Self, that Self for the sake of which alone all things are loveable. I am in fullest agreement about the necessity of recognizing a common basis of understanding, but see no basis for such a common understanding other than that of the *philosophia perennis*, which was the *linqua*

franca of all cultures before the "confusion of tongues".

Very sincerely,

H. G. D. Finlayson, as above.

'On the One and Only Transmigrant', see previous letter.

TO HORACE M. KALLEN

December 7, 1943

Dear Prof Kallen:

I write to thank you for sending me the Jefferson paper. There is very much in his notions about art with which I heartily agree, especially as summarised in the beginning of your section VI.

On the other hand, naturally, I do not agree with your interpretation and estimate of feudal, ie, vocational, societies, for I hold with those who believe that "the need for a restoration of the ethics of vocation has become the central problem of society". I will only go into this for a moment in connection with art. In the vocational societies it is not only held that *to heautou prattein kata phusin* is of the very essence of justice (*dikaiosune*, rendered in the New Testament by "righteousness") but our conception of fine or useless art, and of "connoisseurship" as a luxury are unknown; all art is for use, and to be judged by its utility (not, of course, in the narrow "utilitarian" sense, but with reference to the needs of the whole man). Your inference that the artist is only a means to the consumer's ends is perfectly correct, but does not involve what you infer. One can best grasp the relations if we consider first the case in which the artist is working for himself, eg, building his own house; in this case it is evident that the artist as such is "means" to the man as such. There is no difference in principle when artist [and consumer] are two different persons; how can the maker be other than "means" to the user? The user (patron, consumer) is the "first and last cause" of the work; it is done for him and directed to him; all other causes, including the efficient cause, are by hypothesis "means" to this "end". The balance



here is "corrected" in various ways. In the first place, in such societies, the artist is not a special kind of man, but every man is a special kind of artist; hence, while A is "means" to B, in one relation, B is means to A in another. Members of a vocational society, in other words, provide for one another's needs, and each in turn does a service to the other. There is nothing whatever degrading in this "servility". In the second place, in such societies the "fractioning of the human faculty" involved in our mechanical and industrialised methods of production has not arisen; the artist is still an individual responsible for the product, either individually or through his guild. His work is never, therefore, entirely "servile" (using the word now in its more technical sense), but both free and servile; free inasmuch as he works by art, and servile inasmuch as he works by hand. It is in *our* society, preeminently, that "excellence in the liberal arts is the stuff of honour in the eyes of men and that workmen are not capable of this excellence or ever worthy of such honour."

Cordially

H. M. Kallen, New York, USA.

TO H. M. KALLEN

December 9, 1943

Dear Professor Kallen:

Many thanks for your kind note. I don't, however, agree with your interpretation of the "record". As I see it, men have never been less "free" (except, of course, to work or starve) than here and now. The notion of a hierarchy of functions I accept. But "despising the worker and treating him as a tool of the consumer" is not attributed to Christian doctrine, but to the abandonment of the Christian doctrine against usury and the accompanying gradual industrialization substitution of factory for workshop, etc. Exactly the same process can be watched today wherever industrial methods impinge upon vocational societies; the responsible workman is reduced to a producer of raw materials. The workman to be "despised" (or,

I would rather say, "pitied") is one whose production is for the needs of the body alone, and not for the needs of the soul together and simultaneously (Plato's demand, and according to the anthropologists, the condition that existed in savage societies). Also, there is a great deal of difference between being the "tool" of the consumer, and the "servant" of the consumer; one involves degradation, not the other.

Very sincerely,

H. M. Kallen, as above.

TO BERNARD KELLY

Date uncertain, but 1943 or later

Dear Mr Kelly:

It is not very easy to give a brief and at the same time adequate answer to your question. I would say that from the Indian point of view, *Laborare est orare*; and that the emphasis laid upon perfection in doing-and-making (*karma*) in terms of vocation, by which at the same time the man perfects both his work and himself, is very strong. The *Bhagavad Gita* defines Yoga as "skill in works" (here "skill" is wisdom, just as Greek *sophia* was originally "skill"). Furthermore, of the Hindu terms for Sacrifice, *karma* (action) is precisely a doing in the sense of *sacra facere*. This establishes the norm of all activity; as I have tried to indicate in *Hinduism and Buddhism*, the requirements of divine service and the satisfaction of human needs are inseparable.

Again, there is no liberation but for those who are "all in act" (*krtakrtyah*, "having done what there was to be done"). I think it is difficult for the modern Western mind, which does not merely and properly recognize the validity of both the active and contemplative lives, but reverses their hierarchy (setting Martha above Mary), to realise that alike in Christianity and Hinduism, there is recognized a double norm, an ordinary and an extraordinary norm. We have not only to live this life well, but also to prepare for another. There are not only "values", but also an ultimate "worth" beyond all contraries.



We shall die; and it is the Christian (Thomist, etc) doctrine that it is the "intellectual virtues" that will survive. In the Hindu scheme of life there are recognized four "stations" (*asrama*), those (1) of studentship, (2) marriage, procreation and vocational occupation, (3) retirement, and (4) total renunciation (*sannyasa*) of all rights and duties (which are handed over, naturally and ritually, to one's descendents, in whom our "character" is reborn and who take our place in the world of rights and duties, of which the incumbency is thus hereditary). There is also recognized the possibility of the special vocation by which one may be imperiously summoned to a total renunciation of status and obligations at any age; and however strong the Hindu emphasis upon social responsibility may be, the presence in the world of those who, at least in old age, have laid down their burden, is a perpetual witness to the reality of the worth that transcends all virtues and vices. A society that made a final end of life itself would be materialistic indeed; that would be to substitute an ideal of mere prosperity and "progress" for the kingdom of heaven [which on earth] can only be realised . . . "within you".

To abandon one's vocational activity is not essential to perfection (the "unified state"). The ideal is to "act without acting"; this is like an actor who *plays* his part *perfectly*, but is not involved in it; and who is, therefore, the unmoved spectator of his own "fate", at the same time that this destiny is enacted by his own temporary psycho-physical vehicle. It is in these terms that an Indian "Utopia" is conceived.

You will find, I think, this philosophy of life explicitly enough expounded in the *Bhagavad Gita* (esp III, 15-35 and XVIII, 45-49); and the extent to which this compendium of Vedic tradition underlies and *informs* Hindu society could hardly be exaggerated.

I trust you will find at least a partial answer in the above; or if not, please write further.

Very sincerely,

Bernard Kelly, Windsor, England; see page 20.  
*Hinduism and Buddhism*, New York, 1943; also see Bibliography.



TO MR LUDOVIC DE GAIGNERON

December 16, 1935

My dear Mr Gaigneron:

Let me add that a further perusal of your book leads me to admire very much your most able dialectic.

On just one point, I feel that the argument is a little precarious, viz, in connection with the doctrine of "lost cultures". It seems to me *very* unsafe to assume that precisely all the evidences of a mechanically superior civilisation have been lost and only those of a mechanically inferior civilisation preserved. It would be a strange chance that preserved only the stone weapons of "primitives" (ie, early) man all over the world and no where any trace of his more elaborate mechanisms—if such there were. I think the point is much rather that the lost cultures *were* superior *intellectually*, but not *materially*. By way of illustration, the mode of thought of an American Indian *shaman* is even now more *abstract* than that of the "civilised" man, by far. When the Chinese speak of the "pure men of old", they rather assume that they had very *few* wants, and used very *little* means, than the contrary. If early man was more "angelic" than ourselves, must he not, like the angels, have had "fewer ideas and used less means than men"? The magnitude of our means and multiplicity of our ideas are in fact the measure of our decadence. The pure men of old were *not* "civilised" within the profane meaning of the word.

Sincerely,

Ludovic de Gaigneron, Paris, France, author of *Vers la connaissance interdite*, Paris, 1935.

TO GEORGE SARTON

March 25, 1939

Dear Dr Sarton:

You probably know and must have reviewed F. M. Lund, *Ad Quadratum*, London, 1921. It seems to me a quite remarkable work. If by any chance you have not dealt with it, it seems to

me it would be good to have an article on this and Ghyka's *Le Nombre d'Or* (many editions, eg, Paris, 1931) together. Not of course a job I could do, though there is much material in both of deepest interest for me. As I have often said, "primitive" man knew nothing of a possible divorce of function and meaning: *all his inventions were applied meaning*.

Very sincerely,

George Sarton, professor of the history of science, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

ANONYMOUS

Date uncertain

Sir:

The effect of our civilization and of industrialism upon any traditional society is to destroy the basis of hereditary vocation on which such societies are based: and we may say that thus to rob the man of his vocation, even though it be done in the name of "liberty", is to rob the man of his "living", not only in an economic sense, but in the sense that "man does not live by bread alone": since it is precisely in such societies that the professions themselves and for the very reason that the vocation is in every sense of the word *natural*, provide the solid basis of initiatory teaching.

Sincerely,

The above handwritten letter was neither addressed nor dated.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

April 1, 1943

Sir:

As against Mr Cousens, I maintain that Pontifex III's fine saying, "The first essential is for Teaching to become a

Vocation, which only they may enter who have heard the call", should be engraved on every school and college portal, and that "only they may enter who have heard the call" should be understood to apply to pupils as well as teachers. Assuredly, in this case there would be fewer teachers and fewer pupils. So what? I take it we are all agreed that a demand for quality should take precedence of any demand for quantity. We are suffering nowadays not from too little, but from too much education, or what is so-called. The importance of even literacy has been immensely overrated. Innumerable peoples have been profoundly cultured who could not read or write: for example, of the late Dall Mor of the Illes, Carmichael writes that "he played with equal skill upon several instruments. He had a marvelous ear for the old-world music and melodies, and a wonderful memory for old songs and hymns, most of which died with him when he died. The man was unlettered, and knew Gaelic only." What was true for the Gael was true no less for the American Indian, the Indian peasant and a thousand others before the withering touch of our "civilisation" fell upon them like a blight.

Apart from an elite of teachers and pupils, the effects of a modern education, school or college, are almost wholly destructive of any existing culture, and what they put in its place is something that moves on a much lower level of reference. I have known more than one Professor who has told me that it took him ten years to outgrow his Harvard education. If that can be said of one of the best existing colleges, what can be said of the products of English and American systems of "Universal Compulsory Education"? Speaking for what survives of the traditional cultures of the East, I have said myself in a kind of Open Letter that will appear in the *March Asia*, that "whatever you do to us in the future by way of wars of aggression or 'pacification', keep at least your college education for home consumption." As you have so well said in the same issue in which Mr Cousen's letter is printed, "how seldom nations can be relied upon to keep the peace unless their internal life fulfils for them their own ideas as to what it ought to be." Is that what your "education" has done for the Gael, the Irish, the American Indian and the South Sea Islander? Is that what it has done for *you*?

Surely our crying need is for less and better rather than more



and (if possible) worse education? And that should apply to every other aspect of life; the first essential is that occupations, however "practical", should not be "jobs", but *professions*. The kind of book-learning that can be handed out in large quantities will not provide for that! That was the basis of a caste system in which, as Hocart says, *chaque métier est une sacerdoce*. What has our education got to offer to compare with that? We cannot pretend to culture until by the phrase "standard of living" we come to mean a *qualitative* standard. It is only where trades are callings that, as Plato says, more will be done, and better done, than in any other way.

If that applies anywhere, it surely applies to education, by which our very being can be either warped or erected. Literacy is of supreme importance only for shopkeepers and chain-belt workers, who must be able to keep accounts and able to read the instructions that are put up on the factory notice board. For the rest, it were far better not to be able to read at all than to read what the great majority of Europeans and Americans read today. \* Modern education is designed to fit us to take our place in the counting house and at the chain-belt; a real culture breeds a race of men able to ask: "What kind of work is worth doing?"

AKC

\* How much more excruciatingly pertinent is this observation in the conditions prevailing over forty years later!

TO DR ROBERT ULICH

August 24, 1942

Dear Dr Ulich:

I think one of the best points made in your book is the statement that "all good teaching consists in changing passivity into activity". For is it not the whole nature of progress to progress from potentiality to act? God is "all in act". Moreover it is consistent with the Platonic and Indian doctrine that all learning is a recollection; a picture of a lesson based on this assumption is given following [ie, in, or according to] *Meno*.

I often feel that one cannot teach any understanding directly,

but only *break down misunderstanding*: in other words, dialectical procedure. The Buddhist texts often describe a fine sermon as like bringing a lamp into a dark room. The destruction of something enables us to see for ourselves what was already there.

Very sincerely,

PS: I think you would enjoy P. K. Barlow, *The Discipline of Peace*, Faber and Faber, 1942.

Dr Robert Ulich, professor of education at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, and author of numerous books on the history, theory and practice of education.

TO PROFESSOR LANGDON WARNER

April 13, 1932

My dear Langdon Warner:

Many thanks for your letter. I am sorry indeed nothing can be done in the case of Aga Oglu, who would be such a great addition to our forces—but is useless to grieve over a thing which cannot be amended, after one has done everything possible.

Apropos of our conversation, I reflect that I cannot really agree with the idea that it is good to say to students “bring your own standards”. It is the beginning of wisdom to realise that all standards are relative, and why not let them face this fact at once? In my N Y lectures, beginning with a few words as to the “value of our discipline”, I suggested that if this fact were learnt from the course, it would be of more value to the student than any of the facts of the art history that he might acquire from it. I tell them that *art* is not a universal language; “pure aesthetic experience” is immutable and universal, indeed inscrutable, but no one is competent to enjoy aesthetic experience until all his objections (based on his own standards, for example) and curiosities have been allayed. So I set myself to remove these barriers, thinking that it depends then entirely on the student’s own nature, when he is in a position to possess

the art, or at the very least to take it for granted, whether or not he can enjoy aesthetic experience. Otherwise, I tell them, in merely liking and disliking any work they are doing no more than gaining one more new sensation; than which it would be better not to go abroad, *mais cultiver son jardin*. All this may be hard sledding for the average student, but the more you ask the more you get, and I do not believe in compromise. I know you will be shocked.

Very sincerely,

Langdon Warner, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

TO STUART CHASE

3 February 1941

Dear Mr Chase:

I was much interested in your article in the February *Reader's Digest*, which I saw by chance. It affords another instance of the rediscovery of a principle that has always been known traditionally. Plato (*Republic* 395 B, 500 D) points out that the practice of an art and the wage-earning capacity or business instinct are two different things, so that "a man does not earn wages by his art" as such, but accidentally. He says that "more things are produced, and better and more easily, when one man performs one kind of work *in accordance with his own nature*, opportunely and at leisure from other cares" (*ibidem* 370 C, cf 374 B, C, 347 E, 406 C, etc); and this "doing of one's own work" is his type of "justice" (*ibidem* 433 B, 443 C). St. Thomas Aquinas says that the workman is "inclined by justice to do his work faithfully" (*Sum Theol* I-II 57.3 ad 2) and that he is "only concerned with the good of the work to be done" (*ibidem* I.91.3). I have myself pointed out in print, as did also Eric Gill, that under normal (vocational) conditions the man at work is doing *what he likes best* and would rather do than even play. The fact that under a system of production for profit, in which the workman is no longer a responsible maker but only a tool himself, a system in which livelihood is earned not in the course of following a vocation, but in a job to which one is



forced by need and to which one could never be "called" by anyone but a "manufacturer", the traditional axiom that "pleasure perfects the operation" can no longer apply. I will not lengthen out this letter by citing Oriental sources, but only say that I have myself employed hereditary craftsmen in the East to make a certain number of objects for me, being paid by the day while the work was going on. These men were so much interested in and fond of their work and appreciation of it that they could not be dissuaded from working at it by candlelight at night, although this obviously reduced the total of money they would be able to earn from me. I may add that my own work is also my vocation, and that "hours of labor" mean nothing to me; I should be very angry if asked to work only so many hours per week. But this is the exception under modern conditions, though it was once the rule. I believe it is only when production is primarily for use and not primarily for profit that on the one hand the workman is free and happy, and on the other produces objects of such quality as can rightly be desired by the consumer. It is only because industrialism reverses these conditions, and not because machines of any kind are bad in themselves, that people have become accustomed to expect "art" only in museums, and nothing but utility elsewhere.\*

Very sincerely,

Stuart Chase graduated from Harvard in 1910 and worked as an accountant at the Federal Trade Commission before becoming a freelance writer. The article in question was 'What Makes the Worker Like to Work?', *Reader's Digest*, February 1941. Mr Chase was later associated with the art and archeology department at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, USA.

\* Machines must be distinguished from tools. The latter are unquestionably legitimate, but if the former are not 'bad in themselves' it must nevertheless be recognized that from a traditional perspective something like an 'occasion of sin' indubitably attaches to them

TO STUART CHASE

February 11, 1941

Dear Mr Chase:

Thanks for your letter. The problem you raise seems to me to be one of *values*, and closely bound up with the alternatives, production for use or production for profit. It is significant that "manufacture" has come to mean not the actual maker of anything, but essentially a big salesman. I am not going to deny the "benefits of quantity production", but to make some reservations.

I think it is our great mistake to tend to identify civilisation and standards of living with quantity of wants and their satisfaction. Vast quantities of things are now made, which are just what Plato would have described as "not such as free men really need". Some of these things have only come to seem to be necessities because of the excessive degree of men's separation from the soil on which he ultimately depends. Others which provide us with amusement and "distraction" in many cases seem to be necessities only for the very reason that we are not deriving adequate pleasure (the traditional "pleasure that perfects the operation") from our work. Others are made *only* to sell. And in any case there is some natural antithesis between quantity and quality.

Now the events of the last thirty years have made us a little less confident that our "progress" has been altogether in the right direction; we are not altogether unwilling to make revaluations. The same problem comes up in our educational programmes. If we are to have any standards by which to judge means to living, must we not somehow once more come to kind of agreement about the purpose of life and hence what we ought to mean by "standard of living", or in traditional terms, "the good life"?

Means are not and must not be confused with ends: they are means *to* ends. In any case, it seems obvious that the kind of men we produce is more important than the quantity of things they can possess\*; and that the kind of men we produce is very closely bound up with the kind of things they make, and the quality of these things themselves, which they use and by which they cannot but be influenced.



The basic requirement, is, then, an establishment of and some agreement about real values. The result would be, not necessarily an abolition of all quantity production, but certainly a reduction in the amount of it. This alone would somewhat simplify the problem, which turns fundamentally upon the question, what are the things that ought to be made or what are the things that free men ought to possess? (I am not, of course, referring to a merely political freedom, which as we know does not secure to the worker the opportunity to be happy in his work; it has in fact often been the case, historically, that slaves have been able to be happy at their work in a way that our politically free "wage-slaves" cannot be). I am far from denying that some things can be beautifully made by the use of machines, when these are essentially tools in the hands of intelligent and responsible workmen; but would say that it seems to me that it is not proper for free men (in the full sense of the words) either to make or to use things which are not both beautiful and adapted to good use, *pulcher et aptus*; that only those things that are both useful are really (ie, "formally right") as Plato says "Wholesome"; and that it is from this point of view, and considering men first and things second, that we have to approach this problem.

I am sending you a recent pamphlet. If you are ever in Boston, perhaps you will find time to drop in at the Museum where I am daily except on Saturdays.

Very sincerely,

Stuart Chase, as above.

\*In the modern industrialized world, West or East, no one remembers or wishes to remember that ' . . . a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses' (Lk xii, 15). Indeed, 'in the fatness of these pursey times . . .', avarice becomes the counterfeit of a social virtue. The wording in the last sentence in the penultimate paragraph may seem confusing, but it has been checked against the original.



TO ARTEMUS PACKARD

May 26, 1941

Dear Professor Packard:

First of all, I want to say how completely I agree about the "genius myth". Satan was the first to think of *himself* as a genius. We all have a genius (immanent *daimon*), which we (so-and-so) should obey, but as so-and-so cannot *be*. To become it is *theosis*, but *then* we are no longer "ourselves", but nameless.

Probably we could reach some approximation to agreement on other problems. I am *wholly* anti-totalitarian. But I could hardly think of democracy, however high its present value, as an *ultimate* ideal, as I crave to be governed by my superiors, not by my equals. I do not welcome increased leisure (for myself or for anyone else). By (political) liberty, I understand freedom to *heautou prattein*. When at work we should be doing what we *most* delight in. Culture through work (vocation) or not at all, if we mean the real thing!

The man with the hoe is only disgusting because the farmer, too, has become a proletarian. I do not quite agree that Plato is inapplicable (I am talking about Plato because that is where the discussion started—actually my indoctrination with the *Philosophia Perennis* is primarily Oriental, secondarily Mediaeval, and thirdly classic) now.

I still think more will be done and better done, and we shall have better men, when each man follows a vocation. I cannot regard work on a chain-belt as a vocation but rather as "what is unbecoming for a free man". So long as we demand such a high *material* standard of living as we do, it seems to me some men must be "warped by their menial tasks", if it is to be provided. So it seems all important to decide what is worth making, and whether we want more things, more than we want better men (men for whom life is intelligible). I hope you may be in Boston some time.

Very sincerely,

Professor Artemas Packard is not identified, though apparently he was connected with Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, USA.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

September 5, 1946

Sir

Captain Ludovici and others have referred to the decline in the birthrate as representing a loss of the sense of responsibility to society. May it not be that this loss of the sense of responsibility is bound up with and cannot be considered apart from other and even more fundamental impoverishments? I mean, in particular, that the decline in the birthrate may be largely a function or symptom of the loss of the sense of vocation, *métier*, *ministerium*.

For Plato and the Vedic tradition, all men are born in debt—to their ancestors, to whom they owe the existing amenities of the environment into which they are born; and the main reason for having children is that they may in their turn assume the specific functions that were fulfilled by their fathers before them. The vocation is an incumbency; and it is proverbial that everyone is in love with his own family “trade” (tread, walk, way). But who now takes, or can take this kind of pride in his “own work”, or desires above all things to be what his father was? For the vast majority of men are no longer responsible artists, having a calling, but only earn their living by labouring at joys to which no one but the industrial system, or more abstractly, “economic determination”, has summoned them? If ever once again the concept of *vocational* responsibility can be restored—if ever the miner’s union, for example, comes to regard it as their *first responsibility* to keep home fires burning—then, when the stability of society itself is thus ensured, responsibility will also be felt again, to procreate in that others may carry on our tasks.

AKC

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMON SENSE

August 1943

Sir:

William Jordy, discussing pre-fabricated houses, says in your



July issue, "Whether the results be socially or esthetically desirable is another question, but at least we are abandoning nineteenth century handicraft methods for more efficient and sensible modes of production." I would ask, how can methods be described as *efficient* if the social desirability of the result is uncertain, and how as *sensible*, if we are doubtful about the esthetic value of the results? The philosopher, being the practical man *par excellence*, has always assumed that the only reason for making things is for man's good use; but for the industrialist, who for the present has the consumer by the throat, the primary reason for making things is the profit that can be made by selling them. He is perfectly willing to go ahead, however doubtful the social and esthetic, ie, human value of the product may be, if only he is persuaded that people can be made to want the product; and he has many ways of making people want what he can supply. The human value of the product may be more doubtful; but what does that matter if *at least* old fashioned procedures can be abandoned? The advertiser knows very well that a people believing blindly in "progress" can always and easily be convinced that *any* change would be for the better.

What all this means, of course, is that the consumer's good is "another question". Nothing matters but the interests of the "corporations" and "huge glass and steel firms" who are eager to sell their products, in this case, pre-fabricated houses. This obvious consideration should have been more clearly stated, and not merely hinted at.

AKC

PS: Xenophon, *Memorabilia* III.8.8: 'that the same house is both beautiful and useful, was a lesson in the art of building houses as they ought to be.' *Common Sense*, published for a time at Union, New Jersey, bore the subtitle: the Nation's Anti-Communist Newspaper.



TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

Undated

Sir:

Mr Reckitt's discussion of the "Ivory Shelter" in your issue of Nov 2 raises what can only be a problem in a functionally unorganized and "atomic" society, in which there are no longer professions or vocations, no longer *métiers*, but only jobs and occupations, and where, therefore, the "artist" can be regarded as a special kind of man. In a traditional social order, every man who makes or orders anything is an artist: the forging of weapons is an art, war is an art, and painting and sculpture are no more arts than either of these. There arises then no question between man and artist as to who shall fight; the question arises only as between different kinds of artist, all of which kinds may be equally essential to "good use" and, therefore, to the "good life" that we have in view when we think of civilisation as a "good". In an [traditionally] organized society it is everyman's first duty to practice his own vocation; which, in as much as vocation corresponds to nature, is also his best means of working out his own salvation; man's first duty socially thus coinciding with his first duty from the religious point of view.

It is then, the duty only of the professional soldier, or in other words of the members of the ruling (*kshatrya*, *ritterlich*) class, to fight; it is neither for the priest, the trader, nor for the "artist" (the maker of anything "by art") to fight. If at the present day it is—even for women and children—to fight (women over 50 have been denied U.S. citizenship because they would not promise to bear arms in defense of their country) this can only mean that the community is *in extremis*, where mere existence and "bread alone" are at stake. The fact is that those who aspire to "empire" (in the modern connotation of the term) cannot also afford a culture, or even an agriculture: we do not sufficiently realise that the "civilisation" that men are supposed to be fighting for is already a museum piece. If at the present day we are not shocked by this last consequence of individualism and *laissez faire*, a consequence that violates the nature of every man who is not a soldier born and bred, it is because we are inured to membership in industrial societies that are not organic structures but atomic aggregates of servile units

that can be put to any task that may be required of them by a deified "nation": the individual, who was not "free" before the war, but already part of a "system", is not now "free" to stand aloof from it.

AKC

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

13 March, 1941

Sir:

Mr Herbert Read "refuses to succeed as an artist at the expense of his morality" (Jan 16, 1941, p 147). Bravo! This was the basis of Plato's famous "censorship"; and as Cicero said, *cum artifex, tum vir*. I should have thought that it had been demonstrated once for all, by Plato (not to mention other traditional forms of the *philosophia perennis*), that if we are to have "things fit for free men" made by art (and certainly many things now made for sale are unfit for the use of free men), they must be *both* "correct", "true", or "beautiful", *and* also "useful" or "convenient", and are only then "wholesome". It was said by William Morris, too, that we ought not to possess anything not both beautiful and useful; and in fact all else is either "brutality" or "luxury". The *artist* is the judge of the work's truth, perfection or beauty, and being only concerned with the good of the work itself, will not normally (as the "manufacturer" or salesman may) offer the consumer anything but a true work of art. The *consumer*, on the other hand, requires the work for use, and is the judge of its value for good use. Are we not all consumers, and if so why shrink from putting the artist in his own place and from judging the work by its *value*? By employing an artist we take it for granted that the work will be *pulcher*, and must decide for ourselves whether or not it is *et aptus*.

AKC



ANONYMOUS

Date uncertain

Dr Neibuhr is mistaken when he takes it for granted that caste is a color-discrimination analogous to the color-prejudices with which we are familiar in America. The late A. M. Hocart, a scholar and anthropologist of worldwide experience (very necessary in this case, just because caste is not an exclusively Indian phenomenon), devotes twelve pages (44-58) of his book, *Les Castes* to a destructive criticism of the theory that aristocracies are the end products of conquests, and that the Indian word for "color" (*varna*) can be adduced in support of this concept. The Indian word that most nearly corresponds to the Portuguese *casta* is *jati*, "birth" or "lineage". As Mr Hocart points out, the four castes are connected with the four quarters (and four ages), of which the "colours" are red, white, yellow and black; and as he says, on the conquest theory, we should have to presume successive invasions by peoples of these four colors, and that the last comers always became the Brahmans. It is not quite so easy as all that for a conquering race to become the priests of the conquered. We must always remember that in ancient India, where the now so much abused word "Aryan" originated, the distinction of Aryan from non-Aryan was a cultural and not a racial discrimination. We can speak of an Aryan language, but not of an Aryan people. The distinction of higher from lower castes in India is not racial, but more of "character" (in the theological sense of the word).

Although, on the average, high castes are fairer than low castes, there are very dark Brahmans and very fair Sudras; in Kashmir, some of the lowest castes are quite blonde. I have known Europeans who were liked *in spite* of what was called their "unfortunate off-colour". As a matter of taste, the preferred colour is "golden". And there cannot be said to be a prejudice against a dark colour where this is the colour of one of the chief forms of deity, Vishnu, and of his descendents Rama and Krishna.

I think it is because the Negro problem that he knows is actually one of race *and* colour, that Dr Neibuhr is too much inclined to confuse social with racial differences. As Mr Fisher has already pointed out, the distinction of Muhammadans\* from Hindus is hardly at all a matter of race; Indian



Muhammadans are almost wholly of Indian blood and that, indeed, is one of the principal reasons why such a fusion of the two cultures as actually took place was possible; the other being, in the words of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, that "their Vedanta is the same as our *Tassawwuf* (Sufism)".

A further point: what does Dr Neibuhr mean by "snobbishness?" and who are his snobs? A snob is "a person who does not belong to the upper classes; one obviously without rank or gentility. . . one who vulgarly affects the manners or stations of those of superior rank, esp by a display of wealth" (Webster). It is then with the lower castes that he seems to be finding fault. The corresponding vice in an upper class would be "arrogance". Englishmen in India are often arrogant, and physical or moral "half-castes" sometimes "snobbish", but one could hardly pretend that either of these vices are characteristic of the Indian peoples themselves.

And finally with respect to the distinction of vocational from plutocratic societies, I should like to quote from a Polish writer:

It matters not whether the present-day factory worker is, as regards the intensity and duration of his exertion, in a better or worse condition than the savage hunter or the artisan of the Middle Ages. The point that does matter is that his mind has no share in determining the aims of his work and that his body, as an instrument of independent creative power, has lost most of its significance. Hence his mind, divorced from creative activity, turns in the main to the problem of satisfying the needs of his primitive animal appetites; while his body having lost, in his own eyes, well nigh all its importance as an instrument of skilled production, interests him almost exclusively as a source of pleasure and discomfort" (F Snaniecki, cited in A. J. Krzesinski, *Is Modern Culture Doomed?*). That is what the Indian holds against the modern plutocracies and why he does not want to imitate them, except to the extent that he may be forced to do so in self-defence.

AKC

\* Were Dr Coomaraswamy writing today, almost certainly he would use the word *Muslim* (or one of the spelling variants) rather than 'Muhammadan'. The latter, an adjectival form of the name of the Prophet of Islam, was

adopted by Westerners on analogy with 'Christian'; but the rôle of the two Messengers differs sufficiently to render the supposed analogy null and void, and this has become generally accepted in the years since Dr Coomaraswamy's death. The religion is *Islam*, which in Arabic means submission, ie, to *Allah*; and one who submits is a *Muslim*.

The recipient of this letter is not identified.

Louis Fisher, writer and prominent western follower of Mahatma Gandhi.  
A. J. Krzesinski, *Is Modern Culture Doomed?*, New York, 1942.

Dr Reinhold Niebuhr was a prominent 'neo-orthodox' protestant theologian.

TO THE NATION, NEW YORK

January 30, 1943

Dear Sirs:

Dr Niebuhr, in his review of Shridharni's *Warning to the West* in *The Nation* of January 2, speaks of the Indian caste system as "the most rigid form of class snobbishness in history". One could not have a better illustration of the fallacy of claiming that the form of one's own government" is best, not only for himself, but also for the rest of mankind" (Franz Boas, cited in the same issue). In the first place, it may be observed that no snobbishness can exist where there is no social ambition: Indians do not, like Americans, have to keep up with the Joneses. And let me add that the form of his social order is the last thing that could occur to an Indian to apologize for, when he compares it with the informality of Western proletarian industrialisms. I say "Industrialisms" rather than "democracies" because in these so-called self-governing societies the Indian [can see] nothing that can be compared with the really democratic character of the internal self-government of his own castes or guilds and his own village communities.

It has been very truly pointed out by A. M. Hocart, author of *Les Castes* (Paris, 1938), probably the best book in the subject available that "hereditary service is quite incompatible with our industrialism, and *that is why* it is always painted in such dark colors." Mr Hocart also points out that we must not be frightened by the connotations of the European words that are used to translate Indian terms. The caste system, he says, is not one of oppression, "but, on the contrary, may be much less oppressive than our industrial system." "The members of the



most menial castes are charged with certain functions; but there is no one who can *compel* them to perform them, otherwise than by the employment of a proper etiquette, addressing them with requests are treating them with respect.

Traditional societies of the Indian type are based on vocation. The vocation is sacred, and one's descendents in due course take one's place in the framework of society for the fulfilment of what is strictly speaking a ministration (it was exactly for the same reason that Plato held that we owe it to society to beget successors). If the Indian has no children, this can be remedied by adoption; but if one's children adopt another profession than their father's, that is the end of the "family" as such; its honour is no more, and that holds as much for the highest as for the lowest.

AKC

This letter ends rather abruptly, but it is all that is available to the editors and we believe it makes the essential point clearly enough.

TO DOÑA LUISA COOMARASWAMY

August 11, 1935

Darling:

. . . I did receive, value and answer your letter about the *Vidyapati* experience: I remarked on your having been able to retain it after elimination of the personal element. I do not know about *kudra* as *Krishna's* ego. But *Indra's* position in *RV* already—not all the time, but in many places—represents the revolt of the temporal power (*ksatra*) against the spiritual power (*brahma*), although the legitimacy of *ksatra* depends entirely on *brahma* consecration (*rājasūya*). The dual *Indragṇi* gives you the 2 operating in one—the primordial condition: *Indra*, to whom *Agni* entrusts the *vajra*, the true relationship when the functions are separated. When *Indra* asserts his independence, being carried away by pride (*abhimāna*) the real deviation begins. Historically, this is the *Ksatra* asserting itself, retaining a Luciferian grandeur, but the movement ultimately becomes Satanic. Historically, the *ksatra* revolt is indicated in the



Buddhist period and results in heterodoxy. What has taken place in the West (and is taking place in the East also) is just the inevitable subsequent revolt of the economic (*vaisya*) power against the *ksatra*, and finally the revolt of the *sudras*, resulting no longer even heterodoxy, but a completely antitraditional attitude and disorder. It is the last stage of the *Kali Yuga*. These stages move with accelerated rapidity towards the close. They should be followed by "a new heaven and a new earth", ie, a restoration of spirituality. The transition is always dark and catastrophic. The present crisis is more acute and world wide than any we know in history: what is to follow should be therefore a *very great* revolution in character, a real *Menschen-erneuerung*. I have no doubt that the identification of Indra with Lucifer-Satan is sound. Satan in this sense is the Prince of the World—not to be confused with the Power of Darkness that is the *ab intra* (*guhya*) aspect of the Light. The "back" of God is indeed "hell" for those who "fall"—as Satan falls, but as you will see, it is not really Satan's *home*, but a condition that he falls *into*; Satan's home is in heaven, as Lucifer, as you see in the identifications of Indra with the Sun and his frequent control of the Solar Wheel. . . .

To return to the futility of certain ones—it is a part of the general delusion, the attempt to compromise; one must be *rigidly* orthodox or else impure. My objection to most Christians is not bigotry but that they compromise with modernism. I think consistently highly of Guénon. Speaking of the desirability of a return (for Europe) to Christianity, he remarks that "if this could be, the modern *world would automatically disappear*." Also very good, that while from the eternal point of view it is inevitable that all possibilities, even evil ones, should be worked out, in time, eg, in and especially as now at the end of the *Kali Yuga*, the text applies "It must be that offenses will come, but woe unto them through whom they come. . . ."

The one thing lacking in the organisation of life is *rta*. What *rta* means is the metaphysical pattern, the divine art. Some day I shall try to show how the whole domestic and marital pattern in India follows a purely metaphysical plan, as it was in the beginning (*agre*). Especially as regards *pardah*\*, exogamy, etc. The husband is always Aryan, the mother non-Aryan, respectively Deva and Asura, powers of Light and Darkness; in other

words, the maternal possibility, the power that enables things to be (as distinguished from the power that makes them be) is always *a priori* in the darkness, and of the darkness, and "has never seen the Sun nor felt the wind", in other words, is *behind* the curtain (of the sky), that is to say *Pardah*.

Therefore *Pardah*, as that reflection of the divine pattern, may be reflected on earth. It is as usual nothing but *man* that makes people rebel at such things, just "I".

As regards the lack of profound persons in India also: in any case there is still there a solid mass of conservative peasants whose mentality is almost unspoiled, and this is a great reserve force. Also there are more of the "orthodox" than one sees—the better they are, the less visible. I think in time you will recognize more such people. Anyhow, it is useless to spend time considering the defects of the "educated", they are lost, and that's that; only the positive work is really worth while.

AKC

\* More commonly *pardah*, though the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives *pardah* as an alternative form.

Doña Lusía Coomaraswamy, AKC's wife, who was studying in India at this time. This letter is a combination of two from which personal matter has been removed.

*Purdah* or *pardah* simply means *veil* or *curtain* in Persian, Hindi and Urdu; it refers to the custom among Muslims and higher caste Hindus of veiling women and setting aside areas or apartments for them. It is also reflected among more traditionally minded women of the Subcontinent in the practice of drawing a fold of the *sari* or *dhupatta* over the face in the presence of strange men. For an excellent Western "case study" of the sociological theory of caste deterioration along the lines described in this letter, the reader is referred to *Siena, City of the Virgin*, by Titus Burckhardt, Oxford University Press, 1960.

To JOHN J. HONIGMANN

October 17, 1946

Dear Mr Honigmann:

I greatly appreciate your notice of my *Religious Basis . . . in Psychiatry*. I should like to say, however, that you did not quite



“get” the concept of freedom that I tried to explain. I would admit that a man feels free to the extent that he is in harmony with the culture in which he participates, and that the elite are the most responsible bearers of the accepted values. But this is only a relative freedom, from which the really freeman only escapes when he adopts the “extraordinary” means.

In any case, it is the members of the “elite” who have the least freedom “to do what they like”, and that is why I said Americans would choose (if a caste system were imposed upon them) to be Sudras or “outcastes”.

As to another point: there is no question of wanting to “convert” the West to Indian ways of thinking as such; I have often emphasized that. The question is, “what are the basic premises of the Western world”, that you speak of? I am not sure that these are the ideas of “free enterprise”, etc, etc, that happen to be fashionable at the moment. I am not sure that other ideas such as that of “just price” are not really more basic even to Western society; and all I would hope for is a return to what I think of as the really “basic premises” of Western culture, most of which seem to be ignored at the present day. To that I would add that what I think of as the basic premises of the West are not so far from those of the East; hence there could be a rapprochement without anything in the nature of “a conversion imposed.”

Very sincerely,

John J. Honigmann had reviewed AKC's *The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society* (published as a pamphlet by Orientalia, New York, 1946) in *Psychiatry*, IX, 1946, p 285, from which the quotation below is taken:

What else distinguishes the essay is the fact that it represents a highly sophisticated Indian interpreting the configurations of his own society, a notable experience for anthropologists who are accustomed to working with non-literate groups and who have not yet shown much confidence in analyzing the premises by which their own culture is shaped. . . . If we understand Coomaraswamy correctly, freedom in his philosophy comes when a person is freed of responsibility and relieved by an elite of the necessity of making moral choices. . . .



TO A. M. HOCART

Undated

Dear Mr. Hocart:

Very many thanks for your paper on Caste, with very much of which I am in agreement. One of the best short discussions of caste I know is the short article by Mukhopadhyaya in the *Aryan Path*, June 1933. It might be pointed out that all castes are united *in divinis*, eg, we may say that as *Tvastr-Viśvakarma* (= Christian Divine Architect whose procession is *per artem*), the deity is *Śūdra*, as *Agni* is *Brāhmaṇa*, as *Indra* is *Kṣatriya*, etc.

Very sincerely,

A. M. Hocart, author of *Les Castes*, Paris, 1938.  
Incomplete manuscript letter, unsigned.

TO PROFESSOR WESTON LA BARRE

October 30, 1945

Dear Professor La Barre:

While I agree with many points made in your August *Psychiatry* article (notably the last sentence of the second paragraph in which respect, I think, Pearl Buck often offends) I do not think the first sentence of your note 63\* can be substantiated; cf, for example *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* I.4.14: "This is what makes the *Regnum* (ruling caste) the *Regnum*, viz, Justice (*dharma* . . ., Chinese *li*); wherefore there is nothing that surpasses Justice, and so a weak man as regards one stronger than himself puts his trust in Justice, just as one might in the King." In the Oriental concept of monarchy the king, of course, is expected to be the embodiment of Justice; hence, as in this next text, it is taken for granted that to appeal to Justice is the same thing as the appeal to Caesar. Moreover, as the *Arthasastra* says, "the whole of the science of government depends upon a victory over the powers of perception and action" (cf my *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power* . . ., 1942, p 36).

In view of the fact that you are intending to analyse Indian character in a future article, I am rather disturbed by your notes 26 and 29, which seem to show no knowledge of Indian theology or sociology other than might be expected from the most prejudiced missionaries. In particular, "Juggernath", ie, *Jagannāth*, "Lord of the World", is not a "mother", but one of the names of *Vishnu*, as *Solar Rex Mundi*; to whom no human or other bloody sacrifices are ever made. Again, what you call "punishment by caste" corresponds to our legal disbarment or withdrawal of license to practice in the case of lawyers or doctors who offend professional ethics. I do venture to hope that before committing yourself on the subject of caste you will at least have read what has been said on the subject by such men as Sir George Birdwood (in *Industrial Arts in India*, and *Sva*) and A. M. Hocart (*Les Castes*); as the latter remarks, pp 70, 237, 238:

Nous devons ne pas être égarés par les équivalents européens pour des mots indiens. . . . nous savons que l'histoire de ce système n'est pas l'histoire d'une oppression absolue, mais qu'au contraire il peut être beaucoup moins oppressif que notre système industriel. . . . Le service héréditaire est tout à fait incompatible avec l'industrialisme actuel et c'est pourquoi il est peint sous des couleurs aussi sombre.

It is, in fact, precisely from the axiology underlying caste systems, ie, vocationally integrated social orders, that one can best criticize the immorality of industrial exploitation. I venture to hope that you will also consult a few such works as Sister Nivedita's *Web of Indian Life* and *Kali the Mother*; Bhagavan Das' *Science of Social Organization*; *The Cultural Heritage of India*; and the late Professor Zimmer's forthcoming book, before going on to analyse a "character" with which you seem to be so little acquainted. I am sure you will pardon me for speaking so frankly on a matter of such importance.

Very sincerely,

PS: On the subject of likeness and difference (East and West) you might care to look at my chapter in *The Asian Legacy* (New York, 1945); and perhaps also my *Hinduism and Buddhism* (New York, 1943).



\* It seems that Dr Coomaraswamy must have confused the numbering of the La Barre footnote with one of the notes in an article of his own which appeared in the same issue of *Psychiatry* (August 1945). The La Barre article, entitled "Some Observations on Character Structure in the Orient: the Japanese", did not have so many footnotes, while the Coomaraswamy article did. The latter, incidentally, entitled "Spiritual Paternity and the Puppet Complex", is quite an important study which retains even today all the extraordinary significance for anthropology that it had when originally published more than forty years ago. It has been republished a number of times (see Bibliography).

Professor Weston La Barre, American anthropologist and writer on these and related subjects.

*Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government*, American Oriental Series, American Oriental Society, 1942.

Sir George Birdwood, *The Industrial Arts of India*, and *Sva*.

Sister Nivedita (Margaret E. Noble), *The Web of Indian Life and Kali the Mother. The Cultural Heritage of India*, a very rich compendium of articles on all facets of Indology, in four volumes, issued by the Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta.

A. M. Hocart, *Les Castes*, Paris, 1938.

Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, Princeton, 1946.

TO PAUL HANLEY FURFEY, SJ

August 2, 1935

Dear Professor Furfey:

I found your Forward to Sociology and read it with pleasure and interest. It is about time to realise that science was made for man, not man for science. I look forward to anything further you may find in St Thomas on intuitive knowledge. However, I think it is not—at least generally speaking—sufficient to rely on such intuition as one may oneself be capable of, merely, but that we have also the guidance of Revelation—I refer of course to universal revelation and not exclusively to its formulation in any one religion. Society can only be, let us say, a success insofar as it conforms to the pattern *in principio*; and this demands at least a knowledge of the doctrine of hierarchy. And how can one properly comprehend the true relation of Church and State, Spiritual and temporal power, without a realisation that these are again *in principio* functions of one perfect



consciousness, the eternal Avatar being both *Priest and King* (which is also Thomist doctrine).

Very sincerely,

Paul Hanley Furfey, SJ, professor of sociology at Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, USA.

TO PAUL HANLEY FURFEY, SJ

August 4, 1935

Dear Professor Furfey:

I should like to add to my last note that while I have much agreement with your sociology article, I feel you do not go far enough. The proper ordering of society demands more than purely human effort, and must be based on transcendental truths. We have discussed the possibility of arriving at something of this sort by inspiration, but while the possibility of inspiration undoubtedly exists, is this not really the *prophetic power* and more than we can look for from the fallible and profane sociologist of today? It is surely the business of the spiritual power to lay down the order of society, as it is of the temporal (governmental) to organize and protect the said order. The spiritual power has two resources here (over and above the matter of "guessing right" to which you refer, and as to which in this sense I am a little suspicious): these resources are (1) the infallibility of the Pope, and (2) transmitted doctrine, or Revelation. For example, the Church must surely condemn the capitalistic form, since it condemns usury. I do not indeed see how any social order can approximate to perfection, once the temporal power has revolted against the spiritual power. Moreover, once this has taken place, the next and inevitable step is a revolt of the economic power against the temporal or executive power properly so called, and finally a revolt of the physically laboring power, of the proletariat, against the economic power, resulting in an equalitarianism entirely incompatible with the doctrine as to hierarchy (if there is hierarchy in Heaven, then to the extent that a Kingdom of God can be realised on earth, there must be hierarchy here also). In

sum, I do not see any real value in a sociology which leaves out principles and is based only on facts or experiment. Or in other words, if we leave out God, what can we expect? No doubt you are in a difficult position—nevertheless, it is the duty of the Church to be uncompromising. I agree with your remarks about selfishness—but it is not enough for the sociologist to be *good*, he must also be wise (gentle as the dove and *cunning*, in the etymological sense, as the serpent). What becomes of the spiritual power, if she cannot or does not speak with *authority*, but takes part in discussion with profane teachers as if on equal terms? It is not for the Church to argue, but to *tell*.

Very sincerely,

Paul Hanley Furfey, SJ, as above.

Note that this remarkably perspicacious letter was written more than fifty years ago!

TO PAUL HANELY FURFEY, SJ

November 16, 1935

Dear Dr Furfey:

I wonder if perhaps we might write a joint article on "spiritual authority": it could be in two parts, 1) Christian and 2) Hindu, or possibly in some way *fused*. Your part starting with the idea of a true sociology as "as in Heaven so on Earth", and the notion of Eternal Law; mine very similar, dealing with social order as "regular" or "irregular" (just as an individual man's life may be) using Indian material. Only yesterday I was writing a note on the Indian custom of releasing prisoners and remitting debts on the occasion of the birth of a royal heir, which directly imitates what was done in the beginning when the birth of God's son and heir freed those that sat in darkness. The spiritual sociology is the doctrine of a society that should be *exemplary* in the technical sense.

Very sincerely,

Paul Hanley Furfey, SJ, as above.

TO PAUL HANLEY FURFEY, SJ

August 29, (year unavailable)

Dear Dr Furfey:

Mee's book may be useful, but I have not seen it myself. Also Bhagavan Das', *The Laws of Manu in the Light of Theosophy* (Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras, 1910) gives a good account (discounting the specifically theosophical element). Also recommended, Sister Nivedita, *The Web of Indian Life*, Longmans (she was a pupil of Patrick Geddes).

Plato, *Laws* IV, 709: "give me a tyrant governed city to form our community from, let the tyrant be young, docile, brave, temperate, and so far fortunate as to have at his side a true thinker and law giver", shows the proper relation of the temporal and spiritual power and corresponds to the Indian scheme in which the king should be *Ksatriya*, his minister a *Brahman*. (*Ksatriya* is the Kingly caste, *Brahman* the priestly; *ksatra* the temporal, *brahma* the spiritual power—originally united in the priest-king as also in the Messiah.

Sincerely,

Paul Hanley Furfey, S. J., as above.

TO THE NATION

May 29, 1945

Dear Sirs:

In your May 26 issue, p 604, Mr Hook attributes to Plato the doctrine that "expert knowledge alone gives the right to rule". This is misleading, since what Plato had in mind was something very different from what we mean when we speak of "government by experts". His doctrine is that only wisdom and the love of wisdom *qualify* for rule, and at the same time impose upon those who are thus qualified a duty to participate in public life, for which they will have no natural taste. In the *Laws*, Book III, he defines as ignorant those who are



unamenable to reason and are ruled by their likes and dislikes; and they are "ignorant", "even though they be expert calculators, and trained in all manner of accomplishments"; it is to the wise who live reasonably and harmoniously, that the government should be entrusted, even if they are illiterate and unlearned workmen. His distinction of the ignorant from the expert is as between those who hate and those who love what they judge to be good and fair. *Protagoras* speaks similarly, 322-3.

In the same issue, p 603, Miss Marshall quotes with approval Dr Nomad on the camel and the eye of needle. One would like to know in what authoritative version of the Greek Gospels the word was *kamilos*: not only is it *kamelos* in the Oxford edition of the text that was followed by the Revisers of the Authorized Version, and in the Oxford text of the Four Gospels published in 1932, but also in the James Strong *Exhaustive Concordance*. Jalalu'd din Rumi, who both knew camels and was familiar also with the traditional meaning of "threading the eye of the needle", writes: "The eye of the needle is not suitable for the camel" (*Mathnawi*, I.83). The camel has been, in fact, a recognized symbol of the carnal as distinguished from the spiritual self; and we have the related figure in Matthew, of "swallowing a camel." While it is true that "rope" would also have made good (and traditional) sense, it appears from Liddell and Scott (who can cite only two references to the word *kamilos*, neither of them Biblical) that "rope has been thought by some a more likely figure than a camel", and it seems to me that Mr Nomad, too, is only voicing an opinion, and that he has no right to laugh at the translators, who were not men of the sort that make "boners".

AKC

TO SIDNEY HOOK

Undated

Dear Professor Hook:

I send you the copy of a letter [above] sent to the *Nation* which I daresay they may not find room for. However, I am

sure you will admit the justice of my criticism.

Very sincerely,

Sidney Hook, professor of philosophy, New York University, New York,  
N Y, USA.

TO SIDNEY HOOK

June 6, 1945

Dear Professor Hook:

Many thanks for your letter. We clearly disagree. However, I would say that the whole matter is for Plato not so much a matter of right to rule as of duty. To philosophers generally, governmental activity is distasteful, and should be exercised precisely by those who are *not* interested in power. Government, as distinguished from tyranny, is a matter of Justice, or Proportionate Equality. In *Protagoras*, 322-3, it is pointed out that while the special knowledges and vocations pertain to the relatively few specialists in their fields, the sense of Justice, etc, is not peculiar to the few, but common to all regardless of their vocation, and therefore that all may be consulted in civic matters. All, that is, who aren't "ignorant" in the sense of the *Laws* passage to which I previously referred. I think these passages are absolutely relevant to the present discussion.

Philo follows Plato in saying that philosophers should be kings, or kings philosophers. Philo, of course, maintains that "democracy", as distinguished from "mob rule", is the best constitution. But neither Plato nor Philo is thinking of "philosophy" as a speciality in our academic sense, but of something that is quite as much a way of life as a way of knowing. In most traditional societies philosophy, in their sense, is actually widely distributed and common to all classes. On the other hand, our form of government here is not in fact a democracy at all in Philo's sense, but represents a balance of power reached as between competing interests; and so approaches the classical definition of tyranny, viz, government by a ruler in his own interest. To be *disinterested* is the primary qualification. As the Indian books on government maintain,



"The whole of this science has to do with the victory over the powers of sensation and action", ie, with self-control as the primary condition of authority.

Yours very sincerely,

Sidney Hook, as above.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

March 13, 1941

Sir:

You gave currency (Jan 23, p 154) to Mr Chamberlain's recent statement in *Harper's* that "personal autocracy" is typical of Asiatic states. I have spent the greater part of the last two years on a study of the Indian theory of government; the theory is essentially the same as the Platonic and Chinese theories, and is in fact the only theory of government that could be set up on the basis of the *philosophia perennis*. I can say positively that the Indian kingship, although divinely sanctioned (it would be truer to say *because* divinely sanctioned), implied anything but a "personal autocracy". The last thing expected of the Indian king was to "do as he liked"; he had to do what was "correct" and according to the "science" of government. The Regnum is the agent of the Sacerdotum, and it is the king's business to *do* what the philosopher knows ought to be done; might, in other words, is to be the servant of right.

The traditional theory of government is certainly not one of a government *by* all the people, but it is a theory of government in accordance with *justice*, and *for* all the people. The distinctions between monarchy and tyranny are sharply drawn; the monarch governs by divine right and with the consent of the people; the tyrant is asserting his own will and opinions, to which the people are forcibly subjected. We need hardly say that there is nothing royal about a totalitarian despotism; the tyrant, indeed, is generally a plebian himself.

AKC



November 1946

I fully agree with your reviewer, Paul Derrick (*NEW*, Oct 1946) that "between the idea of popular sovereignty and the idea of natural law, there can be no compromise", and with the views cited from Dr McCabe and Philip Murray. But I must point out that he is wrong in saying that "the doctrine of the divine right of majorities has much in common with the doctrine of the divine right of kings, and with such ideas as that of the historic mission of the German race." In the first place there is no such thing as a "doctrine" of the divine right of majorities, but only an opinion held by many that it is right and proper for a majority to impose its will on a minority; and this view is entertained by many for whom the notion of a *divine* right has no meaning whatever. In the second place, the doctrine of a divine right of kings is not, historically speaking, a doctrine that kings, as such, are divinely sanctioned to do what they like. It is, strictly speaking, a doctrine of the vice-royalty on behalf of the King of kings. As Rumi says in so many words: "Kings are the theatre for the manifestation of God's kingship" (*Mathnawi* 6.3174); while the classical definition of a *tyrant* is a "king governing in his own interests." The king is the mediator of the Natural Law and by all means subject to it himself. As an Upanishad expresses it: "The Law (*dharma*) is that by which the ruler is a ruler, and so there is nothing higher than the Law. Hence a weak man can control a strong one by the Law, as if by a king" (*BU* I.4, 14). An anonymous fifteenth century English writer remarks that "the Law is the highest inheritance of the king *by which he* and all his subjects *shall be ruled*. And if there were no Law, there would be no king and no inheritance." More recently G. Every, writing in *Purpose* (April-June 1939) remarked that "an aristocracy *functioning* as such must have a standard of responsibility outside of its own and its leader's will." As for the Germans: there is a sense in which every race and every individual has a "historic mission", or, in other words, divinely sanctioned rights and *responsibilities*; where the Germans erred was in assuming that they had a divine sanction to play the *tyrant*, as defined above.

Furthermore, the traditional doctrine of monarchy is inseparable from that of vocation, which involves, as Mr Derrick knows, all men's "right (and duty) to participate as responsible agents in the work of the world"—as "co-workers" with God. Every man in his calling participates "in the mystery of the vice-regency (*khilafah*, Caliphate) which was conferred on man alone", as a "trust" (*amanah*). And finally, as Professor Buckler has so often pointed out—see *The Epiphany of the Cross* (Cambridge, 1938)—the analogy of the "kingdom of God on earth" cannot be understood unless the political theory on which the analogy rests has first been understood. Whoever has misunderstood the political analogy of earthly kingdoms and *their* righteousness, cannot have grasped the meaning of "the kingdom of God and *its* righteousness", a meaning "which depends *for its revelation* on the inner meaning of eastern kingship", as Buckler points out in his chapter on "The Oriental Despot". All these considerations rather support than invalidate Mr Derrick's general position, and I think he may find them acceptable.

AKC

F. W. Buckler, identified on p 72 above.

TO PROFESSOR FERNANDO NOBRE

October 31, 1946

My dear Professor Nobre:

It was a very great pleasure to have your company on Tuesday. I have found it very difficult to write any suitable "phrase" for your book; I append below what I have done. What chiefly interests me is that your endeavour has been to design a workable social order ultimately based on the concept of the *Lex Aeterna*, or Universal Justice. On the other hand, I am no more than M. Guénon, free to commit myself to *any* kind of political propaganda. Moreover, even the best patterned structure must depend for its successful operation on the goodwill of its members.

As regards the photograph: I *had not understood* that you wished to reproduce it. I could not agree to that. The only photograph that could suitably appear in your book would be one of yourself. Besides, I am very much inclined to accept the traditional point of view, that all portraiture is undesirable.

I am a monarchist, for many of the same reasons that Professor Nobre is a "demophile". But monarchy is hardly a live issue at the present day. Totalitarianism—a caricature of monarchy—is anathema. Dissatisfaction with the actual operation of democracy—in effect, free enterprise—is almost universal except among those who profit by it. Hence, if any new and better world can be devised, it will not be in any of these patterns. Professor Nobre has made an interesting and practical suggestion in his plan of a "Demophile Government"; intended to preserve the stability of the traditional orders based on the concept of Natural Law, and at the same time, to avoid the kind of government that rests on unstable balances of power reached by competing interests that are by no means those of all the people.

AKC

Professor Fernando Nobre, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

TO THE EDITOR OF ASIA

Undated, but written during World War II

Sir:

Mr Lamott's discussion of the Japanese problem in the October issue of *Asia* is scarcely realistic. He sees that it is idle to expect that the Japanese people will, of themselves, "repudiate the wicked militarists and go to liberal leadership", and also that nothing short of a communistic revolution "will ever be sufficient to displace the present deeply-rooted attachment to the throne." I wonder if he is not on an altogether wrong track in wanting to "dispose of" the "Divine-Emperor ideology of Japan", which seems to him so ridiculous. I am assuming that Japan will ultimately suffer military defeat and



that that will mean, as he says, "the collapse of all that the makers of Japan have toiled at building these many years." But is the modern Japan, created in the image of Europe, and so distasteful to us, the creation of the Divine Emperor? Not at all: it is the work of the industrialists and militarists.

It will certainly not be good psychological propaganda to announce that we are out to destroy the ultimate basis of Japanese culture and, indeed, to offend their deepest religious instincts. If there is great suffering in Japan, its people might well listen to those who sought to destroy, not the Emperor, but the militarists and industrialists through whom the suffering came, and to whose power the Emperor is now subjected. The Divine Emperor ideology of the East (for it is not only a Japanese concept) having been uninterrupted in the history of Japan, might have given Japan a certain title to act as the leader of Asia in a movement designated by the slogan "Asia for the Asiatics". It is the militarists and not the Emperor that perverted that into "Asia for the Japanese".

The Asiatic theory of kingship stands for the subordination of the military to the sacerdotal power, might to right. It is in every sense of the word, philosophical and vernacular, an idealistic theory. I need hardly say that Western sociologists are profoundly ignorant of Oriental theories of government, and scarcely even conscious that a totalitarian state governed by a proletarian individual exercising unlimited power is nothing but a pathetic caricature of monarchy. The Emperor Hirohito and Adolph Hitler make strange allies, and sarcastic propaganda to that effect could hardly fail to meet with some favorable response.

I would suggest that instead of proposing to break down the Divine Emperor ideology of Japan, for which I cannot share Mr Lamott's contempt, we should propose to the defeated Japanese a "restoration of the Emperor to a place of real power." At the same time that such a proposal would enlist the deepest sympathies of the Japanese psyche, a restoration of the Emperor to power would automatically put the military and industrial factions in their place.

TO HELEN CHAPIN

October 21, 1945

Dear Helen Chapin:

On games generally, cf my "Symbolism of Archery" in *Ars Islamica*, X, 1943.

In all ball games I think the ball is the Sun: there is a contest for possession of it, or to direct it on its way; Gods and Titans competing for the possession or direction of the world. "Severed head", precisely because that *is* the genesis of the sun (this last I think you might have understood in the article). As to what you said about caste, don't confuse caste with classes in a would-be egalitarian culture. Just as one must not confuse monarchy with totalitarianism; the old definition of tyranny as a "monarch ruling in his own interests". All monarchy presupposes viceroyalty on behalf of a transcendent justice (*dharma*, *dikaiozone*): and caste *métier* function, determined by one's nature, represents that "own" (*sva* in *sva-dharma*) share of this vice-regal responsibility. Caste is the only system that provides for the dignity of *all* men, whatever their occupation (the only way that [integrates] all men into a certain royalty, provided it is not imposed upon them merely by economic necessity). There are conditions *below* caste (Russia, America) and above caste (God, *sannyasi*, *bhikkhu*); but the social norm is one of the natural hierarchy of functions. "We" only resent the idea because it is incompatible with capitalism (free for all, devil take the hindmost, law of the sharks, etc) because our ideal is not of "beautiful work" but only one of idleness ("leisure", Plato's living in sports always), and because we have no longer any conception of liberty as anything but liberty of choice. In a caste system *this* liberty (comparable to that of children in a family, who do not yet share their parent's responsibilities) to do what one likes—really, the state of subjection to one's likes and dislikes—is least at the top. The proletarian ideal is one of leveling all men down to this childish level. Of course, a herd, a proletariat such as ours . . . could not bear the sudden imposition of a sense of functional responsibility—they would ridicule the idea of judging work by "is it worth doing?" instead of "will it pay?" I ought not to have to tell *you* all this: who have lived in the East where it has not yet become the fashion to regard all *values* as bunk.



This brings me to your “guru” problem. When I go to India, I shall hope to find one myself. At present all I have done is what is called intellectual preparation. However, that is *déjà quelque chose*, and brings about a good deal of “liberation”. What liberation I have thus attained—and however little it is, is still eminently worth while—has come about mainly through constant reading of all the traditional literature and learning to think in those terms. It means, of course, a *metanoia*, a thorough change of mind: insensibly, those things our world rejects became the standard by which we judge it. To undergo this transformation demands a simultaneous *crede ut intelligas* and *intellige ut credas*. So speaking *qua* “guru”, I would say you have to read the “100 best books” (I don’t mean the St John’s College list, although some of them are on it), not “thinking for yourself”, but *understanding* for yourself, and always proposing to be what you *understand*; for the popular view of the philosopher as one who takes things, takes life, *philosophically* is perfectly correct, and unless one proposes to live philosophically, the study of philosophy becomes no more than a drawing-room accomplishment.

To come down to the book: for instance, all of Plato, Philo, Plotinus, Hermes, Dionysius, Eckhart, Boehme; some of John Scotus Erigena, Nicholas of Cusa, St Thomas Aquinas (eg, at least the first volume of the *Summa* in translation), St Bernard; *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Also some of the American Indian origin myths; all of Irish mythology; and the *Mabinogion*. Folklore generally. From the East, all of Rumi, Attar and other Sufi writings including Jami’s *Lawaiih*; the *Bhagavad Gita* (in various versions, until you know it almost by heart); the *Satapatha* and the other Brahmanas—and you know what of Chinese and Japanese yourself. When you have assimilated all this and begin to act accordingly, you will have got somewhere and will find that much of the internal conflict—“which shall rule, the better or the worse, inner or outer man”—will have subsided.

Very sincerely,

Helen Chapin, Bryn Mawr College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. After World War II, she was ‘Asiatic Art and Monuments Specialist’ for the US Department of the Army and had been a research analyst in Chinese and Japanese for the Department of Justice. It was not Dr Coomaraswamy’s



position that such an extensive course of study was necessary for all, but he felt that those who by position or choice were scholars should be properly and fully prepared.

TO WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

June 25, 1910

Dear Rothenstein:

Thank you for your letters and understanding words. I am touched by the real sympathy between us. By the way, it seems that you did not realise my wife is with me! If, as some have suggested, I should be accused of or even imprisoned for sedition on account of that book, I know that you and others will do something to point out that such work does make for real unity and that I might be more useful out of prison than in.

I fully enter into what you say. I want to serve not merely India, but humanity, and to be as absolutely universal as possible—like the *avalokitesvara*. My own life just now seems tangled. I do trust this may never hurt the work.

Yours,

Rothenstein, Sir William, critic, one time head of the Royal College of Art, leading figure in art circles and friend of Coomaraswamy.

TO WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

Undated

Dear Rothenstein:

I received your book of beautiful drawings a few days ago; thank you very much first. I am delighted to have these reproductions of your work and memories of Rabindranath.

I am still harassed about the permit to leave, have spent several hours at Scotland Yard—the difficulty is due to words in a speech I made at Cheltenham in 1907! It is a bitter irony

altogether I fear I shall fail, but am to hear at 12:20 tomorrow. They fear I shall join the California seditionists who are in league with the Germans! Will let you know the result.

Yours,

William Rothenstein, as above.

'Rabindranath' is Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Indian poet and philosopher who at one period enjoyed considerable popularity in Europe and America, and who won the Nobel prize for literature in 1913. There were a number of talented brothers in the Tagore family, and Coomaraswamy was on friendly terms with this circle. Later, however, he outgrew the rather vague humanism which characterized the "Bengali renaissance", of which the Tagores were the chief representatives.

TO WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

February 6, 1916

Dear Rothenstein:

I have had a very unpleasant experience in connection with our trip to Amercia. I got a passport without difficulty in November, and afterwards made all arrangements—a matter of no little expense and trouble, as you will imagine. Now at the last moment, absolutely, I am informed (late on Saturday) that I may not leave the country. No reason assigned, though I am to see the Asst Commissioner of the CID at Scotland Yard tomorrow and may possibly be told. I wonder if you have any influence with the Home Office? There are only 2 days to do anything in. I don't so much feel the mere fact of not going, though that presents very great financial disadvantages but I very much resent the indignity of being treated this way at the last moment. It seems to me extremely unjust. My wife is very anxious *not* to go just now, for other reasons: but we had decided to go, and had made all arrangements, so that I do not like to be "done" in this way, and think you may possibly be able to intervene or advise.

I hope you received *Rajput Painting* safely. Enclosed notices of my wife's recitals may interest you.

Yours very sincerely,

William Rothenstein, as above.

AKC had considerable difficulties with the British authorities because of his views on Indian independence and, in fact, entered the United States as a political refugee—*de facto* if not *de jure*—in 1917. See Introduction.

AKS's wife, using the stage name "Ratan Devi", sang and accompanied herself on Indian instruments, giving recitals in Britain and America.

*Rajput Painting*, Oxford University Press, 1916.

TO THE PEOPLE'S EDITOR, BOSTON TRAVELLER

December 1943

Dear Sir:

In your issue of Dec 7, "Rambler" (rambling!) suggests that India could not have defended herself without British help. As to this, there are three things to be said: (1) could England have defended herself without American help? (2) a totally disarmed people cannot be asked to defend themselves, even when they have been "declared to be at war" by their foreign rulers, who in disarming them, have assumed the responsibility for their defence, and (3) that after what took place in Malaya and Burma, Indians have not felt too sure of England's capacity to defend them. In actual fact, Indians are helping England to defend herself.

Nobody doubts that individual Englishmen have devoted their lives to India. Was it their intention, by this devotion, to establish a claim to political rights? In other words, is the un-asked devotion of these few *to be paid for* by a whole people at the price of years of political and economic subjection? As one who, like Gandhi-ji, is fond of Englishmen (on their native heath), I protest that the very idea of such a bargain would be repulsive to any Englishman. Even Mr Churchill is too honest for that, and frankly admits that England's reasons for holding India are economic ("if we lose India . . . two million breadwinners in this country . . . would be tramping the streets", broadcast on Jan 29, 1935).

Why should the Indians, whose average annual income is about 18 dollars (Budget speech, Central Legislature Assembly, April 1938) be asked to support two million English breadwinners? If *Rambler* does not like the Polish parallel, let me ask, why





A room in Norman Chapel, Coomaraswamy's home at Broad Campton, Gloucestershire, about 1908

strip Italy and Japan of their Empires, if the British Empire may not be liquidated?

To drag in religious questions is disgraceful and childish. Since when have European power politics been governed by "Christian" considerations? On the other hand, culture, politics and religion are indivisible in India. What, if anything, does *Rambler* know about Indian religion or social organization from any but prejudiced sources?

Sri Ramakrishna once remarked that English-educated Indians are "profane"; the late Sister Nivedita (distinguished English pupil of Patrick Geddes, and author of *The Web of Indian Life*, devoted her life to, and died in India) said that Christianity in India "carries drunkenness in its wake."

Yours truly,

*The Boston Traveller*, now defunct, was a daily newspaper. "Rambler's" letter is quoted below:

I think it is the height of insolence for an American recruit to tell British veterans of bombs and shells that "he was there to win for them." As for comparing the freedom of Poland and India, I think if the subject was studied a little more and talked of less, the freedom of India would be accomplished more quickly. Poland was a Christian country, self-governed and united. India has many different sects and castes, each intolerant of the other. Their very religion makes education an uphill job and many British men and women have devoted their lives and ruined their health trying to help them.

If the British did not occupy India, who do you suppose would be in control by now?

Sister Nivedita, *The Web of Indian Life*, London, 1904.

Sri Ramakrishna, greatest of nineteenth century Hindu saints, a Bengali by birth; noted for his frequent and prolonged ecstasies, he attracted a wide following and has been widely influential.

TO ARTHUR SIBLY

December 6, 1945

Dear Arthur Sibly:

Apropos of your reference to India, in your last letter. I fully understand that it is very difficult for you to realise that an



Englishman west of Suez and the same man east of Suez are morally two different beings; this applies, of course, not necessarily to actual physical position, but with reference to that to which the mind is directed at a given time. Half consciously, even Kipling understood this when he said that there are no ten commandments East of Suez. No doubt he thought he was speaking of the "lesser breeds without the law"! but very little psychoanalysis would remind one that *il pittore pinga se stesso*.

I am sending you two books, respectively by a Chinaman and an Englishman, but only as a *man* that you can form a "just" opinion (*as* an Englishman, your opinion will be "English"). Is it too much to ask that you read these books only as a man, forgetting that you are an Englishman? For your humanity transcends your nationality.

With kind regards,

Arthur Sibly was Principal of Wycliffe College, Stroud, Gloucestershire, England, and a former classmate of AKC at this same establishment which is the "public" school at which AKC matriculated prior to entering the University of London. A copy of the previous letter to *The Boston Traveller* was enclosed.

TO ARTHUR SIBLY

November 14, 1931

My dear Arthur Sibly:

I can't help writing you again about India, because your point of view expressed in the last *Star* (p 53) is so typically heartless and self-satisfied. Quite apart from the fact that in India we *always* have hundreds of men imprisoned without charge or trial, and such men can be held for 5 years without trial (your father's history lessons taught me what to think of such things as this!), I must mention that I have *never* met any Indian (and you will realise that I know many who are your or my equals or superiors, intellectually and morally) who believed in "British justice". Really, a fact like this ought to make you think seriously. What do you think the English are? I



have no more anti-English feeling than Gandhi has, but it seems equally ridiculous to suppose they are angels from heaven, capable of governing a whole country entirely alien in civilisation, from a distance and with perfect justice, regardless of the fact that justice would often be against their own interest. In fact, I have often said that one of the strongest reasons against England's governing India is the profound *moral* injury it does to England. Do you realise how you speak like a visitor from Mars? Whereas in fact you are "the man in possession". It would be funny if it were not so tragic.

With kind regards.

Arthur Sibly, as above.

*The Star* was the school journal.

TO ARTHUR SIBLY

January 12, 1932

Dear Arthur Sibly:

Thanks for your reply to my letter, which I know was rather forcible in expression. In discussing justice I had reference (a) to the general situation, including for example the failure and even obstruction of justice that followed the Amritsar massacre, [and] (b) to justice as rendered in courts in cases between Indians and the government or European individuals. (No Englishman has ever been sentenced to death for the murder of an Indian, I believe. Lord Curzon lost his Viceroyalty on trying to do justice in a case of this kind.) I am ready to admit that in some cases an English magistrate judging between two Indian litigants may not only be perfectly just, but more just than an Indian judge might always be in these circumstances. But this is only a particular case of what would be generally true: for example, a Swiss judge might deal better with a poaching case than could an English squire on the bench. Still this would be no argument for government of England by Switzerland.

I notice that English papers are filled with propaganda to "Buy British". The corresponding propaganda in India has been made a felony by one of the recent arbitrary ordinances.

This kind of thing is part of what I refer to as the injurious effect of the present situation on English morality. Still, I am sure it is painful to men like Lord Willingdon to be forced, whether by orders from England or by conviction of duty, to resort to methods of repression which can only be described as lawless: which in other countries, or in an India without ideas like those of Gandhi, could only provoke a civil war. It seems to me that Englishmen, even die-hards, must feel a certain sense of shame in using force to coerce a disarmed people.

With kind regards,

Arthur Sibly, as above.

TO ARTHUR SIBLY

January 18, 1932

Dear Arthur Sibly:

I would add: a body of nine has been condemned to 4 years imprisonment for picketing. One of the recent ordinances permits a police magistrate to condemn to death *in absentia* a man unrepresented by a lawyer and without appeal. Can you wonder that *The Nation* here recently had an article entitled "Has Britain Gone Mad?" I am not solely concerned about India: I am appalled at the moral depths to which England can descend, inasmuch as things are being *done* by Englishmen like yourself, for example, *normally* of high moral principle and respect for law.

Very sincerely,

Arthur Sibly, as above.

TO THE NATION, NEW YORK

January 29, 1924

Sir:

Lord Willingdon is reported to have said that "no self-respecting government could afford to ignore Gandhi's challenge." No one expects the British government in India to ignore the present situation, but there are different ways of responding to it. So far, the response to civil disobedience, which has remained amazingly non-violent in view of the intensity of the feelings involved, has been the establishment of a "legal" reign of terror. Life pensions have been announced as available for informers. Political prisoners are given hard labour or deported. A man can be indefinitely imprisoned without charge preferred, or condemned to death *in absentia* on the basis of a police report alone; and while in Britain, the slogan "Buy British" is everywhere proclaimed, in India children have been condemned to years of imprisonment or to the lash for peaceful picketing. These are not the acts of self-respecting government, but of one driven by blind rage and fear. One does not know how many English officials are still living only as a consequence of Indian reluctance to take life; one does feel that the British are hoping to break down this patience so that they may have an excuse to use their rifles and bombs on unarmed crowds. English diehards have repeatedly admitted that England cannot "afford" to lose India; at the same time they have made it impossible that anything else should happen.

What, if anything, can be done here? We cannot expect the American government to interfere in British "domestic affairs", however scandalous. But would it not be helpful to publish and distribute here some of the recent ordinances, together with a few examples of ferocious penalties inflicted on children, and then to prepare an open letter of protest, such as one cannot doubt that a few hundred of the most distinguished Americans would be glad to sign in their individual capacity?

AKC



TO THE NEW AGE, LONDON

October 15, 1914

Sir:

The present co-operation of Indian with English forces on the European battlefield is an unprecedented event. As not even a war can be productive of unmixedly evil results—such is the fundamental goodwill of man—we may, perhaps, put the fact of this co-operation on the credit side. But let us, at the same time, consider some of its larger implications.

I am not one of those who think that India owes a debt of gratitude to England. Where Englishmen have served or do serve the interests of India to the best of their ability in their lifework, they do no more than their simple duty, whether we regard this as responsibility voluntarily assumed, or as that of a servant paid with Indian money. In the cold light of reason, it is after all from the latter standpoint that most Anglo-Indians have to be judged. In many cases, perhaps in most cases, the same work might have been done as well by Indians: and even if less efficiently, none the less better done by Indians, since efficiency is not the last word in human values. Passing over elements of evident injustice, such as the Arms and Press Acts, the Cotton Excise and Deportations without Trial, I see in the ordinary operations of Government few causes for gratitude: so far as “Progress” is concerned, to have done less would have been criminal, to have done more would not have been astonishing.

When we consider the so-called English Education that has been “given” to India—largely developed in the Macaulayan spirit of those who think that a single shelf of a good European library is worth all the literature of India, Arabia and Persia—and now essentially a matter of vested interests for English publishers, the closely preserved Imperial Education Service, and Missionaries—when we remember the largely political purposes and bias of all this education, its needless secularisation, and that it has discontented the Indians with all that was dearest and best in their home life, and [when we] perceive in what countless ways it has broken the threads of traditional culture—then we are apt to feel something less than gratitude. Compared with all this, the social ostracism of

Indians in India, of which we hear much, is a small matter. Nor can we well forget that if German culture is to be swept away, we have something to lose that has done more than English scholarship has done to make the culture of the East familiar to Europe.

But if I say that India has few causes to be grateful to the English, that is not to say she should not be friendly. In most of the deeper issues of life India has more to give than to receive, and her growing consciousness of this fact is a more secure bond than any considerations of self-interest. Perhaps there are no two races that more than the Indians and the English stand in need of each other's complimentary qualities; broadly speaking, the English needing our long view, and we their practical view of life. Thus, there can never be too much good feeling between the English and the Indians, nor refutation too often made of Kipling's dividing banalities. Yet, I marvel at the generosity of Princes who offer sums for the prosecution of a European war, of which sums several exceed the total amount we have been laboriously collecting for many years for the Benares Hindu University that is a necessity for our national consciousness.

It is hoped by all idealists that one good result of the present war, if success is achieved by the Allies, will be a reordering of the map of Europe on the basis of Nationality. At this moment even Imperial Britain is in love with Nationalism, and autocratic Russia has pledged autonomy to Poland. Most Englishmen would like to see Kiao-chan restored to China, and would be glad for Persia to recover her full independence, alike from Russian and English interference. What will England do for India? Will she do as much as Russia has promised to Poland?

The present Polish policy, according to a published manifesto, is one of neutrality, so far as this is in the power of individuals. The Poles cannot sympathize with Germany, or Austria, or even Russia, but rather wish that each of the Powers may be so weakened as to make possible ultimate guarantees of Polish independence. Some such view as this would be mine for India, and for the Powers of Asia generally. Had India been ready to create or to re-establish her own spiritual and political sovereignty in this moment of European weakness, every idealist must have rejoiced. But India is still increasingly



dominated by European ideals, and these often of fifty years ago rather than of today. Her most advanced reformers—with exception of a few “Extremists”, and Tolstoyans like Mr Gandhi—are typical Early Victorians. The time has not yet come, though perhaps its seeds have been sown, when the Indian consciousness could so far recover its equipoise as to require expression in terms of immediate political self-dominion. One could wish it otherwise, but it is a fact beyond denial that India has yet to go through the European experience with Industrialism before she can become free in any sense worth the name; her ultimate freedom has to be won in mental warfare, and not in rebellion. Having regard, then, to the circumstances of our day, and remembering that time and desire are equally needful for all fruitions, we can feel that the present Indian co-operation and its welcome acceptance may have, and, indeed must have, great and good results, beyond those of the immediate conflicts. It is something gained, that East and West will fight together against the ideals of militarism, though, perhaps, few of the fighting Indians view the matter in this light. At any rate, we can sympathize with the English in their war for the Transvaal. It is something that the Canadians (who have shown themselves so eager to exclude every Indian immigrant from Canada) “should offer praise and gratitude for the action of India, which places that great community in the post of duty and honour and will make it to live in history” (*Toronto Star*): notwithstanding, it may somewhat amuse us that *this* should be regarded as the guarantee of our “place in history”—just as Japan was first considered civilized when she achieved military success against the Russians!

For all these and kindred reasons neither the national idealist, nor the hater of war as war, need regret that in this war English and Indians are fighting side by side. Only let the Indians—as distinct from their own autocracies and from the English bureaucracy—remember the days to come. For the Germans are not the only, though they may be the most extreme, militarists in Europe: and after the war is ended, there yet remains the unceasing, and, in the long run, more cruel war of Industrialism. When humanity has solved that problem, and made that peace—which can never be till East and West consciously co-operate in social evolution, nor before the



religious aspect of life is considered side by side with the material—there may be peace indeed.

AKC

TO PHILIP MAIRET

March 6, 1946

Dear Pam:

*Entre nous* and not for publication: In so many of your editorials you say so many wise things that it shocks me to what an extent you can at other times be confused. I'm referring now to your remarks about India in the issue of Feb 7. Do you know, my wife (who has lived two years in India as a student, lived as Indians live, spoke Hindi and learned Sanskrit) laughed out loud when she read it? My primary interest is *not*, as you know, political, so I will dismiss that aspect by remarking that someone asked me recently if I did not think there would be great disorder if the English quit, to which I replied: "Little doubt; it might be almost as bad as it is now". As regards the English "conscience", that is simply *pour rire* to us; no Indian today regards an Englishman's word as even worth the paper it may be written on. Right or wrong, these are the facts. On the other hand, you admit another fact: that the Indians are unanimous in saying "quit India". If the Englishman remains, it is an illustration of the fact that outside England, he is denatured; at home, the Englishman is a gentleman, one of the most charming in the world; east of Suez, something more like a bounder. Do gentlemen remain where they are not wanted, not trusted, and frankly disliked?

What you go on to say about Hinduism and Indian society might have been written by any Baptist missionary. It is precisely from the standpoint of the moral principles that underlie the forms of Indian society that those of us who are not yet Westernized and modernized, not yet mechanized or industrialized, can and do criticize the immorality of modern Western societies, with their "free enterprise", which *we* call the "law of the sharks". I have in the press a lecture on *The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society* which I gave this

year by request of a Student's Religious Association at Michigan University recently, and will send it on as soon as it is available. Meanwhile, for an English and Christian estimate of the caste system do see Sir George Birdwood, *Sva*, 1915, pp 83-88. You owe it to yourself to do this. I wish, at the same time, you could read Muehl's article on the famine in the January issue of *Asia and the Americas*: and two articles by two other Americans, called "Colonial Report: First-hand Observations", in *Harpers*, March 1946. "Quit . . . India, Java, Annam,—Asia"; that is the only thing one can, if one has any humanity left, say to all Europeans. I'm only amazed that *you* can take up the subject so superficially and quite evidently with so little knowledge of the cultural situation, and in particular and obviously so little (if any?) knowledge of "Hinduism".

Since you know how much I respect and agree with much of your work, I am sure you will feel you had rather I spoke frankly as above, than not.

Very sincerely,

Philip Mairet, editor of the *New English Weekly*, London, a personal friend of AKC and who married the first Mrs Coomaraswamy.  
Sir George Birdwood, *Sva*, London, 1915.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY LONDON

August 20, 1942

Sir:

From the standpoint of the purposes for which the Allies are supposed to be fighting, the government of India by Britain is an anomaly. Indians have been asked to fight for a freedom that does not include their own freedom. The Allies have not won the whole-hearted co-operation of even those Asiatics who are fighting on their side; nor will they until they include in their program what still remains of a Japanese slogan, "Asia for the Asiatics", making it very clear that that includes India for the Indians. Apologists of British rule have lately argued that the

Indians have been and would be far better off under British than under Japanese rule. Indians agree. That is to say, that of two evils, they prefer the lesser evil. But such a choice scarcely makes for enthusiasm. The Allies can count far more on the fact that the Indians are whole-heartedly pro-Chinese than upon their "loyalty" to England; so long as the Allies are true to China, the Indians will be on their side for that reason alone, but not because they are "pro-British"; they are primarily pro-Indian.

If the recent negotiations broke down, whatever the immediate or nominal reasons may have been, the ultimate reason is that it was only too obvious that the British offers (even if a British promise could have been trusted) did not proceed from any change of heart on the British part; no such offers would ever have been made if Britain had not needed India's aid. Actually, nothing can be offered effectively by England that does not imply and confess a conviction of past sins. The British are human beings and Gandhi still believes in "the possibility of human beings making an upward growth." The time for such an upward growth is now. Short of that, the struggle will go on until the inevitable conclusion follows: inevitable, because whatever the outcome of the present war, it is clear that the days of European exploitation of Asia are over. To free India from Britain is pre-requisite to saving India from Japan; to hold on grimly to the "brightest jewel in the British crown" may mean losing it—to Japan.

Bound up with the political problem, but ultimately far more important, is that of the "cultural relations" to be established in a world conditioned by Allied victory and organized on the basis of universal and co-operative self-determination. In that future world all men will of necessity and to an ever increasing extent have to live together. The mere industrialisation of Asia will only set new rivalries in motion, and perhaps result in a new and more terrible war, economic if not military. Much rather must the nations be united in the endeavour to liberate mankind from the evils of industrialism, from purely monetary valuations, and from the endeavour to live by bread alone, of which the consequences are before our eyes.

In other words, if there is to be peace, the relations of Europeans with Asiatics must be humanised; and since the Europeans are the interlopers, that is primarily a problem for



them. The cultural relations, so-called, of Europeans with Asiatics have been until now almost exclusively commercial, or only of European masters with Asiatic servants. "Educated" Europeans in general and Americans in particular are abysmally and incredibly ignorant of Asiatic culture. The time is coming when it will not be held that a man is master of humanistic studies merely because he knows Greek; such a master will have to be familiar also with the literature of at least one of the three great classical languages of Asia: Arabic, Sanskrit or Chinese. Mutual understanding and respect can only be founded in an agreement on principles going deep enough to result in the recognition of the inevitability of great differences in the manner of their application.

The greatest obstacle to such an agreement on principles are (*sic*) to be found in what René Guénon has so aptly termed the "proselytising fury" of Europeans (and Americans). Actually, the belief that there is but a single type of culture worthy to be so called, and the conviction that it is one's duty to impose this culture upon others for their own good, if not at the point of the bayonet, at least by a resort to all the resources of prestige and money power, is hardly less dangerous or destructive than the belief in the existence of a naturally superior race, to which all others ought to be subordinated for its own good and theirs.

By "proselytising fury" neither I nor Guénon have in mind by any means exclusively or even chiefly the activity of religious missionaries, harmful as these have often been. In this connection, however, we must observe that a procedure based upon the conviction that our own religion is the only true or revealed religion, and not one amongst other religions based upon a Truth in which all participate, not merely violates the principle that truths can only be stated and known in accordance with the mode of the knower, but can have results quite as terrible as those that follow from the belief in a single superior race or superior culture; every student of the history of religious persecutions knows this. The proselytising fury is far from being a purely religious phenomena. We see it quite as clearly in the field of "education", and in the often frankly expressed wish and endeavour to impose a purely "scientific humanism" upon the whole world, and in the distinction commonly made between the "advanced" or "progressive" peoples (ourselves) and the "backward" races (others). All that

must be outgrown; or shall we never grow up, never learn to mix with men of other races on equal terms, but always remain cultural provincials? As things now stand, we cannot be too grateful that millions of "illiterate" Indian peasants and women who cannot read our newspapers and magazines but are as familiar with their own great Epics as Americans are with movie stars and baseball heroes, are still practically untouched by any modern influence. Our first duty to these innocents (in the highest sense of the word) is *not* to teach them our way of living (in view of our present disillusionment, how could we have the face to do that?) but simply to protect them from industrial exploitation, whether by foreigners, or Indians. Education can wait until we have educated ourselves; diseducation is far worse than none, for a culture that has survived for millenia can be destroyed in a generation with the best intentions. There are probably not a dozen Englishmen qualified to pronounce on any problem having to do with humanistic studies in India.

I have already made this article too long. What I want to emphasize is that the European, for his own and all man's sake in the future world, must not only cease to harm and exploit the other peoples of the world, but also give up the cherished and flattering belief that he can do them good in any other way than by being good himself; and that that is the first thing to be understood whenever the question of British rule in India is discussed.

AKC

This communication evoked the following correspondence from A. S. Elwell-Sutton in the September 3, 1942 issue of the *New English Weekly*.

Sir:

Dr Ananda K Coomaraswamy's article is so full of question-begging statements that it would occupy too much of your space to deal with them adequately. I would, however, like to put the following three questions to him:

1) When he speaks of the Indian outlook, culture, civilisation, etc, does he refer to that of the Caste-Hindus, or the

"Scheduled" Castes, or the Moslems, Sikhs, Christians (some of the latter dating from Apostolic times)?

2) Does he consider that the standard of administration and justice in India before the British came were as high as those since achieved?

3) Why is he so anxious to uphold the fallacy (as blatant as that of "racialism") of some insurmountable barrier between the outlook of "European" and "Asiatic", which Christianity and Islam (themselves largely "Asiatic" religions) set out to overthrow many centuries ago?

A. S. Elwell-Sutton

AKC's answer follows in the next letter.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

November 12, 1942

Sir:

With reference to Mr Elwell-Sutton's questions of September 3rd: I need not say much about No. 3, as the Editor has answered adequately on my behalf. I do oppose the typically modern anti-traditional civilisation and culture, with its impoverishment of reality (cf Iredell Jenkins in the *Journal of Philosophy*, September 24, 1942) and abstraction of meaning from life (cf Aldous Huxley, *Ways and Means*, p 270ff) to the traditional and normal civilisations and cultures of which Indian can be cited as the—or a—type. On the other hand, my writings are packed with references to the identities of Indian, Platonic, Christian and other like ways of thinking; it is very rarely that I cite a doctrine (eg, that of the "Single Essence and Two Natures)", or *duo sunt in homine*) from one source alone. Further, I would refer Mr Elwell-Sutton to the chapter, "Agreement on Principles" in René Guénon's *East and West*. As to No 2, I should like to take this opportunity to endorse and emphasize Mr Heron's dictum (*New English Weekly*, September 10, 1942, p 171) that "systems of government should be extensions of the peoples concerned", and to quote Plato's well known definition of "justice" as the condition in which "every



man can fulfil his own natural vocation", a condition which it has been the purpose and function of the caste system to provide. On the other hand, education in India, so far as Englishmen have controlled the expenditure of Indian money for educational purposes, has been consistently directed to the formation of a class of persons "Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (Lord Bentinck, see *Cambridge History of India*, VI, p 111); and this education, as Sir George Birdwood wrote in 1880, "has brought discontent into every family so far as its baneful influences have reached". Lord Bentinck even attempted "to stop the printing of Arabic and Sanskrit books . . . and to abolish the Muhammedan *Madrasa* . . . and the Calcutta Sanskrit College" (ib). Neither can we pretend that the economic relations between England and India have ever yet approached "justice". In any case, the concept of "justice" covers far more than the merely impartial administration of laws, especially when the said laws have not been made by those to whom they are applied, but by the foreign administrator himself, who combines in himself executive and judicial powers. It is, indeed, quite possible and even probable that a well paid foreigner can be more impartial than any native in the trial of cases *in which his own interests are not concerned*. Thus, if the Chinese were rulers of England, it would be quite likely that a Chinese magistrate would pronounce a more just decision in a case between a poacher and a squire than would the English magistrate be disposed to reach; yet we should not regard that fact as an argument for the government of England by Chinamen. And what of the cases, civil or criminal, in which the interests of Englishmen and Chinese conflicted? The same would be likely to happen that has always happened when it is a question of an Englishman versus Indian. Everyone knows into what terrible trouble Lord Curzon (who really tried to be the "*just* beast") got himself by attempting to enforce the "law" in the case of the murder of a "native" by an Englishman. We may also recall that not many years ago it was possible in Bengal for a man to be condemned to death without a proper trial or even being allowed to face his accusers, and I believe it is still true, as it certainly was very recently that a man can be arrested and held incommunicado without preferred charges for so long as it seemed convenient. So much for "justice".

Question No 1 would require a long discussion and a profound knowledge of the cultures referred to. It is partly answered, as in the case of No 3, by the consideration that the differences between these cultures are rather accidental than essential; the weight of the differences tends to disappear in proportion to our understanding and in the absence of any third party in whose interest it is to emphasize them. For example, Jahangir (in his *Memoirs*) could speak of his Hindu friend Jadrup's *Vedanta* as "the same as our *tasawwuf*" (Sufism); and I have known more than one Roman Catholic who saw and said that there is no real opposition or essential difference between Christianity and Hinduism, while, as René Guénon very truly remarks: "Hindus may sometimes be seen encouraging Europeans to return to Catholicism, and even helping them to understand it, without being in the least drawn to it on their own account." Those who know India best and can think in the terms of Indian thought, are more impressed by her cultural unity than by her apparent diversity. There are unities more essential and more important than any political unity; and these are based on common understandings of the ultimate ends of life rather than upon its immediate purposes, as to which there can be an almost endless variety of notions.

No doubt the problem of the minorities in India is not without its difficulties; we understand that very similar difficulties are faced by the American Negroes at the present moment; and that even in Europe the minorities problems will not be too easily solved even when the war is over. It may be doubted whether they can be solved by any democratic government (in which the controlling powers represent interested groups) or any tyranny (in Aristotle's definition, government in the interest of the ruler), or by any other than a just government, one in which (as in the Indian theory of government) Justice (*Dharma*) is the King of kings. The present position of Negroes in "democratic" America, and the capacities of Englishmen for feeling colour (ie, racial) prejudice do not lead one to suppose that either of these peoples would be very capable of justly balancing the interests of different Indian communities; and in any case, who has told them that to do so is their business?



TO MONSIEUR ROMAIN ROLLAND

August 22, 1920

My dear M Romain Rolland:

It is by a curious coincidence that I had written to you only a few days before I received your letter of July 6, with your invitation to subscribe to the *Déclaration de l'Indépendance de l'Esprit*. I accept with great appreciation this honor and signify my adherence accordingly. I am indeed convinced that a real unity moves in the minds of men who are widely separated by space and by artificial barriers, and that this unity persists unchanged behind the curtain of a conflict that is more or less unreal. By unreal, I mean arising from an illusion superimposed upon people who have no quarrel with one another.

It is sad that the formulae of thought should have been prostituted in the service of hatred. But to destroy the unreal, it is needful, not that we should seek to punish others, only that we ourselves recognize and live in accord with what is real.

Alas that at the present time the "Powers" have shown so little self-respect, so little self-restraint, and so little sense of reality. They have sought to build for themselves "bigger barns", not thinking that their life may be required of them!

There is a Buddhist text that it would have been well to remember—"Victory breeds hatred: because the conquered are unhappy."

And with regard to the still subject races—how is it that the "Powers" forget that the greatest injury must be inflicted by the tyrant upon himself?

Believe me, yours most cordially,

Romain Rolland, well known French author; his sister translated AKC's *Dance of Shiva* into French.

This letter, so replete with banalities, may serve to show how Dr Coomaraswamy's thought matured to the rigorous standards of his later years.



TO SECRETARY OF STATE JAMES F. BYRNES

November 11, 1945

Dear Sir:

It is becoming more and more evident that the Atlantic Charter is a dead letter so far as the American Government is concerned. Confronted with the situation in Java, all you have done is to order that the Dutch—who are using American military equipment given to them for use against the Japanese, to suppress the Javanese national movement—to paint out or otherwise remove or conceal the signs of its American origin. Is this not a case of the ostrich hiding its head in the sand? I wonder if you have asked yourself whether such an underhand policy will pay in the long run. The Asiatic peoples are perfectly able to recognize who are, or are not, their friends; and a time will come when (to say nothing of present moralities) the friendship of even such far-away peoples as the Javanese may be of value to the United States, whose government is supposed to believe in some kind of cooperation by all the peoples of the world.

Yours very truly,

James Francis Byrnes, Secretary of State (1945–47), Government of the United States.

AKC signed this letter in his capacity as Honorary Chairman of the National Committee for India's Freedom.

TO DR ANUP SINGH

July 10, 1944

Dear Dr Anup Singh:

I look forward with pleasure to the appearance of a Symposium to be entitled the "Voice of India", to be published in the cause of India's freedom. We hear nowadays almost exclusively of India's right to a political and economic freedom and (with the exception of an infinitesimal number of Indian traitors whose vested interests are bound up with the *status quo*) we affirm this right unanimously and unconditionally.

There are, nevertheless, other and perhaps even more important freedoms to be considered, which may be called collectively a cultural freedom, bearing in mind that in a country such as India, with all its millennial and living traditions, and where it has never been attempted to live by "bread alone", no dividing line can be drawn between culture and religion. There are cultural and religious as well as political Imperialisms; and if we are to be free in any more real sense than that in which the "economically determined" Western man of today is free, then our whole system of education must be liberated not only from direct or indirect control by any foreign government, and from the text-book racket, but also from the "proselytising fury" of those who identify civilisation with democracy, and democracy with industrialism and culture with scientific humanism—or, conversely, religion with Christianity.

This means that Western friends of Indian freedom must recognize that ours, if it is to be real, will include a freedom to differ from them in very many important issues. Our "voice" that they can hear is largely the voice of a generation of men already tutored willy-nilly by Europeans and moulded by the characteristic forms of Western education and Western moralism; but there are other voices, those of our true conservatives and authentically Indian, which it is almost impossible for our Western friends to hear. To these friends, whose sense of justice and disinterested labours we gladly acknowledge, there must be spoken this word of friendly warning: that it is not always a freedom to abolish the caste system or to break down *purdah*, or to establish a system of universal compulsory education—quantitative rather than qualitative, or a liberty to choose our representatives by count of noses, that we want. We want also a freedom not to do any of these things, especially if, like the Pasha of Marrakesh, "we do not want the incredible American way of life"—with its exorbitant percentage of mental casualties. The voice of a free India will not be an echo of any other, however confident, but her own.

AKC

Dr Anup Singh, Indian born author, lecturer and political scientist resident in US. This letter was published in *The Voice of India*, a monthly issued by the

National Committee for India's Freedom, Washington, D. C., U.S.A., of which Dr Singh was an official

TO THE VOICE OF INDIA

November 1946

Sirs:

To Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru I extend cordial greetings on his birthday, best wishes for his success in the conduct of the present Interim Government, in winning the confidence and support of our Muslim countrymen and friends, and in all his endeavours to establish relations of economic and cultural intercourse with other peoples. By many sacrifices and much suffering, and by his persistent efforts in recent years to "discover India" he has qualified himself for the responsibilities that rest upon him.

AKC

*The Voice of India* as above.

The following letter was sent to Dr Coomaraswamy on July 4, 1944:

Dear Dr Coomaraswamy:

A committee of distinguished citizens in India have made plans to publish a 500-page volume to commemorate Gandhi's 75th birthday and to tender it to the Mahatma on Oct 2nd or later. The committee have asked me to approach Gandhi's friends and admirers in America for contributions—preferably essays in appreciation, but at least brief messages. Accordingly, I am humbly approaching you, knowing of your admiration for the Indian leader. . . .

Sincerely, yours,  
Krishnalal Shridharani



The following response was sent:

Mahatma Gandhi-ji, *Namaste*:

I am happy to have this opportunity to express my feelings of highest respect and admiration for the great leader who, throughout his life, has consistently refused to dissociate politics from religion; and has never repudiated the caste system, but would only re-form, ie, correct its working.

I mention these two things because of the fundamentally Indian or rather universally traditional principles involved. The concept of government as a divinely delegated power, and that of a vocational status determined by one's own nature are the indispensable supports of any sacramental sociology or dedicated life. There can be no just or stable government devised or administered by anyone who is not himself an obedient subject of Justice (*dharma*, *dikaioisune*), or as we should express it, is not a *Dharmaraja*. The concept of "self-government" (*svaraj*) is not then primarily, but contingently a matter of independence of foreign domination. In the Indian and traditional theory of government the essential quality of royalty is one of self-control. The principle holds good equally if the government is by an aristocracy or even by a bureaucracy. A just government is not a balance of power established as between the representatives of competing interests; the ruler must not govern in his own interest, or in that of the poor or "common man", but impartially. You, Mahatma-ji, have seen that it is only by means of an interior discipline that India can free herself, or keep her freedom from any external tyranny.

As for the caste system: justice and freedom manifested in the social order can only mean that it is *just* that everyman should be *free* to earn his daily bread of following that vocation by which his natural (natal) abilities imperiously summon him. There can be no justice in an industrial society, however "classless", under the "law of the sharks", or as it is called here, "free enterprise", which means "his hand against every man's, and every man's hand against him"; nor freedom where unemployment is a condition of "progress", and man's occupations are therefore "economically determined". If, as Eric Gill points out, the factory system is unChristian "because it deprives workmen of responsibility for their work", it is no less unHindu in as much as it denies to everyman the very

means through which he can best of all develop his own perfection—that of a devotion to *his own* work. No one can be called free who is not free to love his own work and to perfect it. The modern artisan, on the contrary, as Jean Giono says, has been degraded by the machine; “the possibility of making masterpieces has been lost to him. We have eradicated from his mind the need for quality and made him eager for quantity and speed”. Whereas the caste system is inseparably bound up with the concept of quality, at once in the produce and the production. It is from the standpoint of the caste system that we judge “the incredible American way of life”, and repudiate it, except to the unfortunate extent that it may be forced upon us in self-defence.

It is proverbial in India that men are naturally inclined to love, and even to overvalue their own hereditary professions, whatever these may be; a lineage is, indeed, considered broken if the family profession is abandoned. In any case, the professions are sacred obligations and even, as A. M. Hocart has called them, “priesthoods”. As Jacob Boehme, who was himself a shoemaker, says (and let us not forget that caste is by no means an exclusively Indian institution):

Who'er thou art, that to this work art born  
A chosen work thou hast, howe'er the world may scorn.

If you ask an Indian who he is, he will reply ‘I am a lover of God’, by his name of Vishnu or Krishna or Siva or Kali, as the case may be. None of us has any difficulty in understanding St Paul’s recommendation “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. . . . For he that is called, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman”.

As regards the related question of the untouchability of those who are without caste or have lost caste, it is one that we must resolve for ourselves in our own way. Since those who have lost caste can be reinstated by rites of purification, it might be possible by means of an analogous *prayascitta*, to “lift up” any qualified outcaste, ie, anyone able and willing to accept the spiritual disciplines that caste demands. Swami Vivekananda’s dictum, “If the outcastes would improve their status, let them learn Sanskrit”, is a pointer in this direction. Let us not forget that the Gods, to whom members of the three higher castes correspond, were “originally mortal”, and won their present



position solely by their adherence to the Truth, that *Satyagraha* of which you have personally demonstrated the power. A related procedure might involve the decision that there are kinds of work and conditions of work to which no one of the human species should be asked to submit; and in making such a decision, one might at the same time contribute by example to a solution of some of the problems of labour in the West, where the chain belt workers, overseen by efficiency experts, can hardly be distinguished from the members of a chain gang except by the fact of their daily escape. For the rest, and as things are, I will only say that we might as well admit Americans as admit outcastes indiscriminately to our sanctuaries. It is indeed by no means unlikely that it is a resentment of our classification of *them* as untouchables, coupled with pangs of conscience about their own treatment of Negro citizens, that has made Americans so sensitive to many aspects of our social problems that they do not understand.

I conclude, Mahatma-ji, by saying how gladly I associate myself with my fellow countrymen here in paying you honor upon the occasion of your seventy-fifth birthday. All of us wish you many, and *happier* returns of the day.

AKC

The committee in question did not see fit to publish this 'letter'. For AKC's other views of Gandhi-ji, see also 'Mahatma' in *Mahatma Gandhi—Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work*, edited by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, London, 1939.

*Prayascitta* = expiation, atonement, amends, satisfaction, penance.

TO S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM

October 26, 1946

Dear Durai Raja Singam:

As to yours of October 17, there is obviously very much in Gandhi-ji's sayings about art that I can fully agree with, but I don't think any good purpose would be served by trying to draw parallels with things I have said. I have the highest respect for Gandhi-ji, of course, and also agree with him in all that he



(and Bharatan Kumarappa) have to say about industrialism on the one hand and "Villagism" on the other. But all that Gandhi-ji has to say about art is a product of his individual thinking; he doesn't really know what he is talking about, and he often seems to hold the naïve view that "art" means just painting, whereas art, from an Indian and all traditional points of view covers *all* making and ordering, and so embraces about one half of all human activity, the other half being represented by conduct (*urthi*). On the other hand, all that I have to say about art is not a matter of personal thinking at all; it is a matter of knowledge, based on *sruti* and *smṛiti*.

An example of Gandhi-ji's deviation, the result of personal feeling, is his attitude to the wearing of jewellery (on which see my article on "Ornament" in *Figures of Speech*. . . ). Where he should have distinguished between good (significant) and bad (meaningless) jewellery, he simply wants everyone to stop wearing it! This is a part of his propagandist asceticism; his asceticism is right for him, and no one would defend *Sanyas* against the world more than I would; but he is very wrong in demanding not merely a certain austerity—but particular sacrifices from everyone; that can only result in all the evils of a "premature *Vairagya*"; even Sri Krishna would not have all men follow in his way (*Bhagavad Gita* III, 23)! Much of all this is due to Gandhi-ji's intellectual background, which is still fundamentally Victorian. So while I can agree with many things that Gandhi-ji has to say about art, I *disagree* with the general trend of his position in this matter.

Gandhi-ji is a saint, not an intellectual giant; I am neither, but I do say that those whose authority I rely on when I speak have often been both.

By the way, I can't find time to write to your son yet awhile; anyway, he ought to write to me first !!!

Very sincerely,

S. Durai Raja Singam, identified on p 25.

Although we have not undertaken to define every foreign word and phrase that appear in this collection, several that are used in this and the preceding letter are so fundamental to an understanding of the letters themselves and especially to some degree of understanding of Indian thought generally that exception have been made. Thus, *sruti*=revelation, the revealed word, that which was *heard in principio*. *Smṛiti* derives from *sruti*, being that which

derives from reflection on the latter; tradition, that which is handed down. *Vairagya* ÷ turning away, renunciation; from *viraga*, dispassion. This is the second requisite for an aspirant to gnosis (*jñāna*), the first being *viveka* or discrimination (between the Real and the unreal).

TO MR KODANDO RAO

April 10, 1947

Dear Mr Kodando Rao:

It was a pleasure to meet you again and to hear you speak yesterday. As you know, I also have constantly emphasized that the great difference between the traditional Indian and the modern western outlook on life are a matter of times much more than that of place. I would like to urge you to study some of the modern Western writers on these subjects, especially Guénon, of whom you will find some account in a little book of my own that I am sending you.

As Mr Toynbee said, "We (of the West) are just beginning to see some of the effects of our action on them (of the East), but we have hardly begun to see the effects—which will certainly be tremendous—of their coming counteraction upon us." Toynbee speaks of the West as the "aggressors" and the East as the "victims". Historians, he says, a thousand years hence, will be "chiefly interested in the tremendous counter effect which, by that time, the victims will have produced in the life of the aggressor", and thinks the real significance of the coming social unification of mankind will "not be found in the field of technics and economics, and not in the field of war and politics, but in the field of religion." You, perhaps, would prefer to say in the field of thought or philosophy; at any rate, in that of the ultimate principles on which any civilisation is really based.

We Orientals, then, have at least as much responsibility for the kind of world that we shall be in the future as have the Western cultures that are still predominant but at the same time declining. Few of our students from India have had any chance to realize the extent to which leaders of Western thought are themselves aware of this decline. You will find some discussion of it in my little book; but let me add that at Harvard, the Professor of Education very often refers to Western civilization



as an "organized barbarism", and that the Professor of Sociology in a letter I received yesterday refers to it as a "nightmare". To a large extent, Indian students are just barbarians too, just coming over here to learn our method of organization. Is it really this barbarism and this nightmare that we want Indian students to acquire and take back with them to India? Is it not, on the other hand, also *their* duty to bring something with them when they come here? Something of their own to contribute to the solution of the great problems of the relation of man's work to his life, that faces the East and the West alike?

How can man live happily? This is a much more important question than that of how to raise their standard of living—so-called. We forget that men have hearts as well as minds and bodies that want to be fed!

There is something *mean* and *cheap* about the way we all come here, to study. There is an old saying that whoever would obtain the wealth of the Indies must take the wealth of the Indies with him, to buy with. What do our already anglicized boys who are so much ashamed of their "uneducated" wives and sisters bring with them? Do they bring *anything* whatever that Americans have'nt got already? Of course these Americans are not interested in you; you have nothing to offer and only come to get what you can! Not two per cent of Indian students come here to study cultural subjects—are only qualified to study PLUMBING?

These boys return to India a queer mixture of East and West, strangers here and no longer at home there! How can they ever expect to be happy men?

We are glad to say that some Indian students at least are soon disillusioned and long to go back to discover India, for they have never known their own home, the which they learn about for the first time from Europeans.\*

You raised the question of hospitality: let me say that we often, and with pleasure, entertain groups of Indian students at home. They take possession of our kitchen, prepare their own food; the shoes are left at the door, they wash their hands, we all eat on the floor, with our own fingers—just as one would in India. My wife and I are intellectually more "orthodox" and old-fashioned than most of the boys who come to us. But we are painfully Europeanized nevertheless. What is more, we do not expect that the boys will be free to invite us to eat with



them and their families in their homes, nor do we expect them to treat us on terms of social equality in India. How much less have ordinary Americans and Europeans a right to expect such a thing?

As a matter of fact, we respect more those Indians who will not eat with us, than those who will. We see no reason why we should contaminate their homes and kitchens merely out of politeness.

As for the girls: I say that however much they know—a man is still UNEDUCATED if he cannot appreciate and understand and be happy with an Indian girl, if she is still Indian, however little of his kind of information she may have. Praise God if the Indian girl retains standards and concepts of value about life and conduct that European women have been robbed of. If most of them want to stay as they are, for God's sake let them!

Take note of what Sir George Birdwood wrote in 1880: "Our (Western) education has destroyed their love of their own literature . . . their delight in their own arts and, worst of all, their repose in their own traditional and national religion. It has disgusted them with their own homes—their parents, their sisters, their very wives. It brought discontent into every family so far as its baneful influences have reached."

With kind regards,

\* 'European', as frequently used by Asians and Africans, refers to persons of European ethnic background and is not limited to Frenchmen, Germans, Spaniards, etc, and may often be applied to Americans.

Pandurangi Kodando Rao was an Indian academic, a lecturer in botany, who became involved in the independence movement and was imprisoned for his support of Gandhi. He wrote widely on public affairs, and lectured in India, Canada, the USA and Australia. He was married to an American wife, and was a moderate in politics.

Sir George Christopher Molesworth Birdwood, British civil servant, born in India, was also a professor of botany; came to England while still a young man and worked for many years in the India Office. He maintained a lifelong professional interest in India.

Address given by Dr Coomaraswamy at Philip Brooks House, Harvard University, on the occasion of the unfurling of the flags of newly independent India (Hindustan) and Pakistan, 15 August 1947.

### *The Renaissance of Indian Culture*

Our problem is not so much one of the rebirth of an Indian culture, as it is one of preserving what remains of it. This culture is valid for us not so much because it is Indian as because it is culture. At the same time its particular forms are adapted to a specifically Indian nature and inheritance, and they are appropriate to us in the same way that a national costume is appropriate to those who have a right to wear it. We cut a sorry figure in our foreign or hybrid clothes, and only invite the ridicule of foreign musicians by playing the harmonium.

The younger generation of go-getters that comes to America to study, and that will largely shape the course of Indian and educational policies in the immediate future is, for the most part, as ignorant of Indian traditions and cultural values as any European might be, and sometimes even more so; and just because of this lack of background cannot grasp the American and European problems that confront it.

Freedom is the opportunity to act in accordance with one's own nature. But our leaders are already de-natured, quite as much as Lord Macaulay could have wished them to be: "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." Because they have yet to "discover" India, they have not realized that the modern world is no longer an integrated culture, but an "organized barbarism" and a political pandemonium. They have no more the moral courage to "be themselves"—without which they can be of little use to themselves or anyone else—than had their predecessors upon whom a so-called Western education had been more forcibly imposed in Missionary colleges or government controlled universities.

It will take many a long year yet for India to recover her spontaneity. For the present, most of our "educated" men are just as much as Americans dominated by the current catch-words of "equality", "democracy", "progress", "literacy", and so forth. In the past, and still today, Indians have earned

and deserved much of the contempt of the Europeans whom they have flattered so sincerely by an imitation of all their habits and ways of thinking. We, too, are on our way to become a nation of *Sūdras*, at the same time industrious and ignorant. Notwithstanding that "all the precepts of philosophy refer to life", we have learnt from the modern world to despise the lover of wisdom, and to leap before we look.

On the other side of the Indian picture are the great figures of such Indian sociologists as Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Bharatan Kumarappa. Both are advocates of forms of human association unfavorable to war, and both are significant as much for the rest of the world as for India, in this age of violence. Unlike the Utopias of the modern West, neither of these men supposes that the ills of the world can be cured by planning or economic means alone, without a change of heart. Both are seeking to restore forms of social organization in which human values shall predominate over those of "success" evaluated in terms of money.

Again, throughout the ages, India has been a land of profound religious convictions and of equally generous religious tolerance. Here at least, if nowhere else, it is still possible for men to think of their own faith as the natural friend and ally of all others in a common cause. It has been said that in the West, religion is fast becoming an archaic and impossible refuge. But in India it still provides for both the hearts and minds of men, and gives them an inalienable dignity because of this. The natural connection of religion with sociology and politics has never been broken. There is no such opposition of sacred to profane as is taken for granted in the modern West; in our experience, culture and religion have been indivisible; and that, in our inheritance, is what we can least of all afford to abandon.

Indian women, at the present day and in so far as they have not yet been "brought up to date", are our best conservators of Indian culture. And let us not forget that in a country like India, any judgement of standards of culture in terms of literacy would be ridiculous; literacy in the modern world of magazines and newspapers is no guarantee of culture whatever; and it is far better not to know how to read than not to know *what* to read.

In the meantime, also, there is an immediate and desperate



need for the establishment of cultural, and not merely economic and political contacts with the rest of the world. No doubt, the West is very largely to be blamed for its own cultural isolation, which amounts to a very real provincialism; but the blame is also ours, for our students and other representatives abroad are more often engineers, or physicists or politicians than men of culture—where they ought to have been both at once, able to contribute something more than their fees to those from whom they came to learn the newest techniques. When the culture that we propose to restore was live, the learned men of foreign countries came from far and wide to study in India. The measure of our culture is not that of our ability to learn new tricks, but that of what we have to give.

I have been asked: "What is your message to the new India of our dreams?" This is my answer: "Be yourself. Follow Mahatma Gandhi, Bharatan Kumarappa, D. V. Gundappa, Abdul Kalam Azad, Abdul Gaffar Khan, and Sri Ramana Maharshi. Cooperate with such men as the Earl of Portsmouth, George Bourne, Wilfred Wellock, Marco Pallis, René Guénon, Jean Giono, Fernando Nobre. Do not consider the inferior philosophers. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

AKC

Obviously this short address is not strictly a letter, but it repeats in a clear and incisive manner points that AKC made in letters to his correspondents and, particularly, to the *New English Weekly*; it is also an admirable summation of his views apropos the 'soul' of the newly independent India, and for these reasons it is included—not to speak of its pertinence for ourselves.

TO MRS GOBINDRAM J. WATUMULL

August 29, 1944

Dear Mrs. Watumull:

Many thanks for your letter and prospectus. I have always had most pleasant relations with the "Bombay merchants" of

India and Ceylon and always respected them as staunch supporters and adherents of a truly Indian orthodoxy.

As regards your Foundation, I feel some hesitation. I have, as you say, contributed to the mutual understanding of East and West. But this is not at all an easy problem, and means something more than learning to do business and "eat, drink and be merry" together. Modern civilisation is fundamentally opposed to all our deepest values. I am not all sure that even a wordly advantage is to be gained by learning from America, land of the "dust bowl", now when, as Jacks and Whyte say in *The Rape of the Earth*, "misapplied science has brought to the world's richest virgin lands a desolation compared with which the ravages of all the wars in history are negligible." Cf the Earl of Portsmouth's *Alternatives to Death*, and the many similar books that have been lately published in England; and also, of course, Marco Pallis' *Peaks and Lamas*, an outstanding work of the contact of cultures, and especially valuable for its discussion of the problem of education.

Our young men who come to America know little or nothing of their own civilisation; these young ignoramuses, graduates as they may be of Agricultural or Engineering colleges, have nothing of their own to contribute to America. A true reciprocity is impossible under these conditions. What we need is Professors of Indian rather than of American civilization. I note that your program considers only "agricultural and technical" education, to the exclusion of those fields on which *can* be established a real cultural exchange. Had I not better wait and look forward to your visit to Boston this Fall?

Very sincerely,

Mr and Mrs G. J. Watumull of Honolulu, Hawaii, had established a Foundation to promote, and a chair of, Indian Culture at the University of Hawaii 'in the interests of better understanding between the peoples of the United States and India', and had asked AKC to become a member of the Advisory Board.

Jacks, G. V. and Whyte, R. O. *The Rape of the Earth*, London, 1939.

The Earl of Portsmouth, *Alternative to Death*, London, 1943.

Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, London, 1939.

TO MRS GOBINDRAM J. WATUMULL

January 3, 1944

Dear Mrs Watumull:

Of course, it is a worthy object to wish to alleviate Indian poverty and disease. The difficulty lies in the fact that modern civilisation has so many difficulties and dangers of its own, for example such a high lunacy rate in America. One can do irreparable psychological damage whilst trying to do physical good. There is just as much difference between the "enormously wealthy" and the "pitifully poor" here as there is in India. The only ways to remedy such things are partly political and then by restoring (if it were possible) the status of the guilds and *panchayats*, and the joint family system. We have disrupted the structure of Indian society, and then blame it for not functioning!★ Does Western society function? What is "free enterprise" but "his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him?"

You speak of the background of Oriental learning, etc, that we possess. It is little enough. But I do not see how one can hope to help others until one has thoroughly grasped and *unless* one is in sympathy with their aspirations, their way of life, their whole "ideology". Whoever would [render such help must] first of all become one [of them]. In China, the Jesuits are required to have earned their living for two years by *practising a Chinese trade* before they are allowed to teach. I believe the best thing anyone can do for India is to go there *to study*.

I shall be meeting the Scientific Mission here, too; and am reading a lecture for them and the MIT boys on "Science and Religion" (the argument being that there is no possible conflict between them).

With kindest regards,

★AKC, in argument, did not always take into account the fact that India was culturally decadent and internally divided or else the Europeans would never have gained a foothold there. The same applies to the earlier and doubtless providential advent of the Muslims in India.

Mrs Gobindram J. Watumull, as above.

MIT = Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.



TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

May 11, (year not given)

Sir:

Mr Duncan, reviewing C. F. Andrews' *The True India* in your issue of March 30, is perfectly right in asserting that only Mr Andrew's moralism leads him to deny the phallic symbolism of the *lingam* and the employment of erotic symbolism in Indian art and metaphysics. The *lingam* is unquestionably a phallus; and there are sculptures and paintings of which it may be said that they ought not, perhaps, to be seen by those who are entirely ignorant of their significance, and therefore capable of a shocking irreverence "until they reach the stage in which, having discovered the essential truths, they become indifferent to the mode in which they are presented" (Sir John Woodroffe, *The Garland of Letters*, 1922, p 220).

What could be done in India could not have been done with equal propriety in Europe, and might have been ill-adapted to what Jung has called the "brutal morality suited to us as recently civilised, barbaric Teutonic peoples . . . (for whom) it was unavoidable that the sphere of instincts should be thoroughly repressed" (Wilhelm and Jung, *Secret of the Golden Flower*, p 125).

At the present time, it may be observed that although Christian theology is rarely presented in terms of an erotic symbolism perceptible to the eye, it has by no means neglected the use of a verbally erotic symbolism, and that no distinction can be drawn in principle between what is communicated to the eye and what to the ear. It holds for Christianity as for Hinduism, that "all creation is feminine to God", and therefore, in the words of John Donne, "nor ever chaste unless *Thou* ravish me." The language of the *Song of Songs* is as technical as that of the *Gita Govinda*, or that of the *Fideli d'Amore*. The generation of the Son of God is by "an act of fecundation latent in eternity" (Eckhart), a "vital operation from a conjoint principle" (St Thomas Aquinas); St Bonaventura speaks of the Exemplary Reasons (Ideas) as conceived "in the vulva or womb of the Eternal Wisdom" (*in vulva aeternae sapientiae seu utero*)—that Wisdom of whom Dante says that "She exists in Him in true and perfect fashion as if eternally

wedded to Him", and whom he addresses as "Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son". Mr Andrews' sentimentality is essentially the same as Miss Mayo's and we could pray to be delivered from our friends as well as from our enemies in this connection. Both Miss Mayo and Mr Andrews should learn more of Christianity before they presume either to malign or to apologize for Hinduism.

AKC

C. F. Andrews, British educator with life long interest in Indian affairs; associate of Gandhi, and Vice President of Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan institution.

Katherine Mayo, crusading American author who liked to initiate 'causes'; best known for her *Mother India* which Indians viewed with indignation. Sir John Woodroffe, British jurist prominent on the Calcutta High Court. His avocation was the study of the Tantra, and he did more than any other Anglophone orientalist to expound its underlying principles and significance. In the earlier part of his writing career, he published under the pen name Arthur Avalon.

Richard Wilhelm and Carl Gustav Jung, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, London, 1932.

TO ERIC GILL

May 23, 1939

Dear Eric:

... Talking of "sex symbolism", it is wonderful how Coulton misunderstands and devalues the wonderful Mary legend which he gives on P 509 of his *Five Centuries of Religion*. He misses entirely the tremendous significance of the sacrifice of one's eyes for the sake of the vision. There is a Vedic parallel, too, where Wisdom is said to reveal her very body to some. Perhaps you can print this legend someday, and I could write a few words of introduction. On the other hand, perhaps the world does not deserve such things nowadays!

With love from Ananda,

Eric Gill, see the Introduction.

Coulton, George G., *Five Centuries of Religion*, Vol I, Cambridge, England.





Albrecht Dürer's 'Virgin on the Crescent' from his *Life of the Virgin* (1511)



TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

January 20, 1944

Sir:

Permit me to say that Mildred Worth Pinkham's book on *Women in the Sacred Scriptures of Hinduism*, recently reviewed in your issue of September 16th, cannot be very strongly recommended. I rather agree with a more learned reviewer in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1941, p 195), who says: "There are a great many quotations, some of them interesting, but they neither prove nor indicate anything in particular. They are not suitable for the use of Hindu women, nor for scholarly reference, nor are they welded by interpretative comment into any sort of unity, nor is the "status of Hindu women today" discussed in relation to these snatches from the scriptures. The book is one of sustained confusion from beginning to end . . . . The quotations are all from English translations and provide neither a comprehensive list of references, nor sufficient context to be very helpful."

There is, of course, an Indian theory, metaphysical, as to the natural, and therefore just, relationship of the sexes, interpreted in terms of sky and earth, *sacerdotium* and *regnum*, mind and perception, and it is, indeed, in terms of the *Liebesgeschichte Himmels* and the relationships of Sun and Moon, that what we should now call the "psychology of sex" is set forth. All this fundamental material, in the light of which alone can the special applications be understood, is ignored. Neither is it realized that the whole problem is not merely one of external relationships, but one of the proper co-ordination of the masculine and feminine powers in the constitution of everyone, whether man or woman, that is involved. Neither is it even hinted that in our ultimate and very Self, these very powers of essence of nature are One.

AKC

Mildred Worth Pinkham, *Women in the Sacred Scriptures of Hinduism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1941. This unfortunate book began as a PhD thesis, and reflected only a part of the said thesis, which may help account for its inadequacies.

TO GEORGE SARTON

August 21, year not given, but 1942 or later

My dear Sarton:

Many thanks for your note. "Spiritual Authority . . ." might come more into your field, not only as having to do with "political science" (sociology), but because it deals throughout with the problem of conflict between the sexes, which is the same thing as the conflict between the inner and the outer man. There is, in fact, a traditional psychology that is of immense *practical* value and that leads to solutions of the very problems of disintegrated personality with which we are still concerned.

Kindest regards,

Very sincerely,

George Sarton, professor of the history of science, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

*Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government*, Supplement to the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, XXII, 1942.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

Undated

Sir:

Apropos of Mr Porteus' review of *Peach Path*, I suggest he read Evola's "Uomo e Donna" in *Revolta contra il Mondo Moderno*. In this book *as a whole*, Evola mis-states the traditional theory of the marriage of Church and State. In the traditional theory of the marriage of the *Sacerdotium* to the *Regnum*, the former is masculine and the latter feminine. Hitler's and Satan's way is, therefore, feminine. The deviation of the male, ie, clerical side is not so much by fault as by default.

AKC

Jacques Evola, *Rivolta contro il Mondo Moderno*, Milan, 1934. The chapter in

question was translated by Zlata Llamas (Doña Luisa) Coomaraswamy, AKC's wife, and published in the *Visvabharati Quarterly*, vol V, pt iv, 1940.

TO S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM

April 26, 1947

Dear Mr Raja Singam:

Many thanks for your son's letter and the interesting photographs of yourself and family.

As regards your "Selections" from my writings, please omit page 12 (enclosed); page 9 requires some alternation; I have never placed nationalism above religion. Better omit the paragraph I have struck out. Also page 11, omit what I have struck out: I have *never* been "aware of the degrading position of women in Ceylon society" !!! Such ideas would seem quite nonsense to me.

I expect you have received my book, *Am I My Brother's Keeper?* I have no new photographs.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

S. Durai Raja Singam, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia (cf p 30). Mr Singam was collating a series of quotations from AKC's published works to be included in a book of *Selections* . . . . The section in question here was AKC's discussion of 'temporary marriage' in *The Dance of Shiva*, the chapter on 'The Status of Indian Women'. The *Selections* . . . were published in a limited edition by Mr Singam for private circulation. *Am I My Brother's Keeper?*, New York, 1947.

TO THE SHIELD, LONDON

January 1911

Sirs:

I write these notes at the request of a friend, but it must be understood that I have made no special study of the matter, although I do take a great interest in the status of women both



in East and West. I am personally convinced that the State Regulation of Vice is altogether degrading and objectionable.

In India very little interest is taken in the State Regulation of Vice, because it is a purely European institution; it practically affects only the British Army, and its victims, and most Indians are probably unaware of the facts. Moreover, the contagious diseases in question are either of European origin, or at least have become much more prevalent since intercourse with Europeans became easier.

There is probably no social culture in which the honour of women is more jealously guarded than the Hindu; at the same time, no society is free from the problems of prostitution, and it is characteristic of Hinduism that a solution very different from the Western has been sought. This solution lies in the recognition of the prostitute as a human being. There is no street solicitation in India, unless it may be in the large towns where the structure of society has broken down, and modern conditions prevail. In practice, the dancing girls attached to the Hindu temples in Southern India, and the professional singers and dancers generally in other parts of India, are courtesans. But they are also in the highest sense artists. They are independent, and sometimes even wealthy. I do not think they are ever exploited, as in the White Slave Traffic of Europe. The most important point to observe, however, is that they nowise lack self-respect—they have a position in the world, and are skilled in a refined classic art, the lyric symbolism of which is essentially religious. The “Anti-naught” movement of modern reformers I regard as fundamentally mistaken, as it merely degrades the status of the courtesan without in any way touching the root of the problem.

There is also a very great difference between the Eastern and Western attitude towards sexual intercourse. On the one hand the ethic of Hinduism, with its ideals of renunciation, is even severer than that of Roman Catholic Christianity: on the other, we have to note that Hinduism embraces and recognizes and idealizes the *whole* of life. Thus it is that sex relations can be treated frankly and simply in religious and poetic literature. In its highest form, the sex-relation is a sacrament; and even more secularly regarded, it is rather an art than a mere animal gratification. All this, and many other things, must be considered in estimating the status of the Indian courtesan.

The most fundamental idea in Indian religious philosophy is that of unity. "That art thou": every living thing is an incarnation of the one Self. All living things are bound together by this unity. Thus, in the most literal sense, "In so much as ye have done it unto these, ye have done it unto Me." Further, "In as much as ye have done it unto Me, ye have done it to yourselves—and how shall ye not pay the price?" For next to this intuition of unity is the doctrine of *karma*—the inevitableness of the consequences of actions. As surely as any individual or society degrades or enslaves any other, so surely that degradation will react upon themselves. State Regulation is one of the many modern attempts to escape the consequences of actions. But this is not possible: in one form or another the price must be paid, and is paid. State Regulation is an attempt to protect *men* (and indirectly some of those women who belong to the already economically protected class); it not only does not protect, but it degrades those women against whom society has already offended economically and spiritually. Some of these women have been betrayed—that is to say, they have given for love to those who have deceived them what it is quite respectable to sell for a home and a legal guarantee. Others have been driven by pure economic stress, the need for bread. Some have been coerced. In India conditions are somewhat different—courtesans are generally the daughters of courtesans. In Southern India some others are of those who are dedicated in infancy to a temple, as *devadasis* or servants of the god. I cannot say whether all *devadasis* are also courtesans—the majority certainly.

No society can purify itself physically or spiritually by further offending against such as these. What is needed is to raise the status of women, to honour motherhood in reality and not in name merely; and to *feel responsibility*. A society which by its conventions or its economic structure forces certain women into this position has for its first duty to protect them, not those who have offended against them. To fail in this duty can but increase the evil.

No society, as I have remarked, has ever been free from the problem of prostitution. I think that the evil has been least evil where, as in India, the recognized standards of life are exceedingly high; and where at the same time the courtesan is protected by her defined social or religious status and her own



culture. There is no doubt that under such conditions, spiritual degradation and physical disease must have been reduced to a minimum. Where, on the other hand, the courtesan is treated as an outcaste, scarcely even as a human being, the reverse result must follow.

I may, however, suggest that care should be taken to avoid language which betrays a missionary or sectarian bias (such as appears here and there in the "Queens's Daughters in India"). I will refer only to one other point—the relation of the matter to police activity. State Regulation involves the registration of prostitutes, and this opens the door to blackmail and all kinds of abuse. It is most undesirable that any power of this sort be placed in the hands of the Indian police.

AKC

*The Shield*, the official organ of the British Committee of the International Federation for the Abolition of State Regulation of Vice, 17 Tothill Street, Westminster SW, London, England; January 1911.

TO DOÑA LUISA COOMARASWAMY

May 15, 1932

Darling:

. . . As to virginity, of the Matrona (*ṛātā vuvatih*): there are several ways of looking at it. In the first place, you know, whatever is given out or emanated (*srsti*, etc) by the pleroma (*pūrma*) cannot diminish what is infinite (*aditi*). She is naturally in every sense inviolable. Neither is he *really* but only logically disintegrated (*vy asrusakā*, etc. by the act of fecundation, for the same reason. Lateral birth: for one reason because the branches of a tree grow out sideways, like the arms of the cross, implying extension into timespace. Also, in a quite literal sense, Caesarian birth implies virginity. Thirdly, this is one way of saying that the *eternal* mother "dies", or is "slain" by the birth of the Son. It is for this reason *Māyā*, mother of Buddha dies, as one can see by comparing with the Indra nativity in *RV* IV, 18, 1-2 cf V, 2, 1-2: Indra in fact destroys the womb (*yonim aibhidya*) lest there should be any but an only Son of God. She



who lives is the human counterpart of the eternal mother. In Christianity the eternal mother is the “divine nature by which the Father begets”, the temporal mother Mary, from whom the Son takes on “human” nature. These are also the two lotuses of the upper and nether waters, the lotus of the nether waters representing the ground of actual existence, the deck of the ship of life. The doctrine of a temporal *and* eternal birth of Christ is orthodox (Thomist).

On being “bound to the stake” (*yūba* = *vanaspati* = tree = cross) see also the case of *Nrmadha* (= *Purusa medha*, “human” sacrifice) in *Jaiminiya Brahmana*, II, 17, 1. By the way, in connection with the extraordinary consistency which we have recognized in traditional scriptures: this consistency is really that “infallibility” which in Christian tradition is attributed to the Pope only, but as Guénon remarks should be the attribute of every initiate through whom the doctrine is transmitted . . . .

. . . Observe the likeness of the idea of sacrifice in Vedic and Hebrew tradition. In the *Zohar*, “The impulse of the sacrifice is the mainstay of the worlds and the blessing of all worlds. “By it the “lamp is kindled above” (ie, the Sun is made to rise). Again as to *nabhā* as starting point—“When the world was created, it was started from that spot which is the culmination and perfection of the world, the central point of the universe, which is identical with Zion”, citing Psalms 2, 2: “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined forth.”

To go back to your question about food: Gandhi’s “the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear to a people famishing and idle (*asanāyita*, *avratā*!) is work and promise of food as wages” is true *in principio* and metaphysically: those *in potentia* (“ante natal hell”) are precisely famishing and idle. That is of course *karma kanda* stuff. From the *jnana kanda* point of view, the last end being the same as the first beginning, “idleness” (properly understood, viz, action without action is the principle of action, as in *BG*) is the goal, but in the meantime food is necessary to operation: to the final view is illustrated in fasting as a *metaphysical*—not religious—rite, ie, in “initiation” of *mrtyu*, *asanāya*, cf *Br Up* I, 1, 2. . . . .

Doña Luisa Coomaraswamy, AKC’s wife, was, at the time this letter was written, in India studying Sanskrit.

TO WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

September 15, 1910

Dear Rothenstein:

It was good to hear from you, August 28, and will be still better to see you so soon. As I told Mrs H. . . , I am engaging tent accommodation from 5.10 at Camp, Exhibition, personally for 2 men and 3 ladies subject to confirmation by Mrs H. . . when she arrives in Bombay.

It has been a hot time but very interesting travelling about the last 3 months. I have collected many good pictures and stayed with many dear and beautiful Indians. There is nothing like the peace and stillness of the real ones. I can give you letters to some, especially Benares and Calcutta. But I also strongly recommend a visit to Lucknow to see dancing there. A boy of 15, pupil of India's most famous dancer, is so beautiful and so static. These conventional gesture dances, symbolizing all religion in a Radha-Krishna archon-language are the most wonderful things in the world, all have the quality of Hindi poetry. This is so wonderfully trenchant: "when we loved, the edge of the sword was too wide for us to lie on, but now a sixty foot bed is too narrow." Another song says with exquisite absurdity: "Had I known that love brings pain, I must have proclaimed with beat of drum that none should love." How many philosophers have proclaimed that all sorrow is wound up with desire, and how futile save for the few that escape, like electrons from an atom, these proclamations by beat of drum.

I cannot make my home in England anymore for a time. After a year in Europe next year I shall live here most of the time for 10 years. My wife is going back earlier than we expected for various reasons, mostly connected with this, and I shall let the chapel next year and she will build a little cottage by the sea at S. . . [probably Staunton, but illegible]. I don't know yet if she will be out here much with me or not. We have got on very well living in purely Indian fashion so far.

I wonder if you will go so far as Lahore—I expect not. You, too, ought to be here for years. I have never felt the land so much before. I feel the intense thinness of English life in contrast. There is such a deep emotional and philosophical

religious background to all this. There is, or in the ideal life at least, there is not any meaningless activity.

Learn all the Hindustani you can. It is really easy. Especially pronounce all vowels as continental and learn to pronounce consonants after. Forbes' *Hindustani Manual* (Crosby Lockwood, 3/6) is good.

I don't think you'll get much out of Monica Williams. The *Bhagavad Gita* is the first thing. Then *Laws of Manu*, *Tiruvachakam*, and such books. But this will not reach you in time, and anyhow you will find it easier to read up the matter after you've been here than now.

When in Bombay, drive through the Marwari bazaar. There is very little else to see in the place, comparatively speaking.

You ought to see Agra for the architecture, but can very well omit Delhi.

Yours,

William Rothenstein, see p. 326.

Monica Williams is not identified.

'The Chapel' refers to Norman Chapel, Broad Campden, Glostershire, England, where AKC had lived and where he owned William Morris' Kelmscott Press, now a National Monument.

TO WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

Date uncertain

Dear Rothenstein:

Please post me the Himhar (?) print to Campden. I am afraid you must have been disappointed last night. I had not heard him sing before. However, the hymn have a little idea. The following is a translation:

Unknowable, abiding in the thought of Brahmans, rare one, Veda-Essence, atom unknown to any, who art honey, who art milk, who art a shining beam, Lord of the devas, inseparably mingled in the dark Vishnu, in the four-headed Brahma, in the fire, in the wind, in the sounding ocean, in the mighty mountains, who are great and rare and precious, dwelling in Tiger-town (Chidambaram, a sacred town in



South India)—vain are all the days when thy Name is not spoken.

Is it not grand to know that men can sing this passionately? I return to Campden Saturday, and shall not be up again for ten days after that.

Yours very sincerely,

To William Rothenstein, as above.

TO WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

October 10, 1910

Dear Rothenstein:

I shall probably just have time to see you in Bombay on 27th, as I am passing through after a tour in Rajputana. You must really go to Jaipur to see the *people*. The whole country is full of beauty and romance, so different from the British parts. I should almost recommend a night or a few hours at Ajmere to see the marble pavillions on the edge of the lake. Shah Jahan must have been a supreme artist—everything he had to do with is marvellous, and his reign marks the zenith of Mughal art.

I find the indogenous element in this art even larger than I surmised, and the Persian element very much smaller. People have a mania for thinking that everything comes from somewhere else than where you find it. I am beginning to see that the best things are always *well* rooted in the soil. I have got hold of a magnificent lot of old Rajput cartoons and tracings of miniatures—I can't tell you how beautiful some of them are. Most are 18th century, and the best may have been earlier than that; even so, one can only think of Boticelli as giving an idea of one or two. This Hindu or Rajput art is the descendant of Ajanta, its rise and zenith and decline seems to cover at least 1500 years, The 200 years of secular Mughal art is but a breath beside it.

This is a beautiful Rajput city on a lake. I have been over the Palace, pure white marble. No furniture at all in the Raja's apartments. How different the old idea of luxury. We have no

conception now of what luxury can be—we know only comfort. It seems to me we have lost in nothing more than in our idea of pleasure.

You will find me alone. My wife had to go home on certain family affairs, and the question of economy also had to be considered. I have been spending more than all my possessions on pictures. I expect we shall make great changes. I feel I must be out here more and also when in England more in London, etc. So we are going to let the Chapel for 5 or 7 years and build a cottage at Staunton by the sea near Barnstaple and have that for a country house instead. It is a great wrench, but I think must be for the present.

It will be good to see you at Allahabad. You will have to help me judge some pictures, etc. I suppose you will come about January 5–10 or thereabouts.

When in Bombay the only thing of interest is to drive through the Marwari Bazaar. I will see you soon after arrival however.

Yours,

William Rothenstein, as above.

See note on page 371 as regards 'the Chapel'.

AKC had been travelling in Rajputana (modern Rajasthan), amassing the magnificent collection of Rajput paintings which first propelled him into prominence in the art world. He was an official at the All-India Exhibition held at Allahabad in 1910.

TO WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

January 22, 1911

Dear Rothenstein:

As per your wire, expect you here 24th at midday. Shall send servant to station to bring you here. We shall go to see Miss Fyze same afternoon as she is leaving next day.

Enclosed may help to explain the pictures here. I am very sorry when I wrote the two big books I did not quite realise the relative importance of the Rajput school. Now I see it is really *the* great thing and the other in spite of its wonderful and

beautiful qualities, lesser. I did not want to say this then, either because it might seem (and unfortunately even now may seem) Hindu prejudice. However, I am quite sure of it and the conviction has grown quite slowly and surely with me. Looking forward to seeing you. I have very much to talk of and am very sad.

Yours,

William Rothenstein, as above.

'The two big books' were presumably AKC's *Indian Drawings*, 1910 and a second series issued under the same title in 1912. The 'other' is presumably Mughal painting which, until AKC's 'discovery' of Rajput paintings, was considered the summit of Indian pictorial art.

TO WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

December 29, 1914

Dear Rothenstein:

Thanks for your two notes. I quite agree that criticism and appreciation are not a permanent compensation for creation. However, the Lord made critics as well as artists, I suppose: and they feel bound to get justice done for the works that have touched them most. This necessity which they feel *may* be the means of creating beauty in their own work.

The more austere Indian poetry which is at the same time fully poetical would be found, I take it, in the Saiva and Sakta hymns. I would gladly work at these if I could find a suitable collaborator. However, I think it is still very necessary to present the typical Vaisnava work. Even the *Manchester Guardian* declared last year that Tagore was the first Indian poet to love life and believe in physical beauty! It is a natural transition for me from the Vaisnava paintings to the Vaisṇava literature, and I shall probably do more of it. I have in hand a very big work on *Rajput Painting* which it is almost settled will be published by Clarendon Press. In this connection, if you have any new important Rajput paintings which I could see, or photos of them, I should be very pleased, as the very last subjects are just going in for reproduction now.



I wish there was any chance of having a good museum in India. If they would only ask me to undertake it—perhaps at Delhi—I should feel I had got one or two things I really could do well. I also regret there is no place to which I can present or bequeath my own collection. The other sort of work I should like would be to be a Professor of “Indian” at a Western University—but that idea would seem absurdly fanciful to most people.

Meanwhile I have also undertaken a book on Buddha and Buddhism for Harrap. I regret that some of Tagore’s Buddhist pictures (which I think really very bad) will be used again in this; however, it can’t be helped.

Yours very sincerely,

PS: Do you think Kabir is genuinely lyrical, or good only for his ideas?

*Rajput Painting* (see Introduction), Clarendon Press, London, 1916. Republished in 1975.

*Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, London, 1916; there have been at least two more recent editions. See Bibliography.

Kabir was a 14/15th century *bhakti* poet; a number of his poems were translated by Rabindranath Tagore and published as *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, London, 1915.

The Tagore referred to in the last paragraph of the letter was Abanindranath Tagore of the Calcutta school and uncle of the better known Rabindranath.

TO WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

January 5, 1915

Dear Rothenstein:

I am very glad to have the Kabir translations. They seem to me to be much more authentic than Rabindranath. You know, of course, Westcott’s book on *Kabir and the Kabir Panth*. I don’t think it is at all *certain* that Kabir is a Moslem name—there are several Hindi poets named Kaviraj, Kabirai, etc.

I forgot to say Vishnu did not care for English housework

and I suppose felt homesick, so we had to send him home—much to our regret, partly as we had of course to pay his fare both ways without having him long. With regard to Vidyapati, I should like to add to what I said before, that I think that sort of literature is of value to modern Europe quite apart from the mysticism—as an education in love: also to remind us that Muhammad could have been perfectly *sincere* when he said “Three things he had loved, Perfume, Women and Prayer, but the last most!” Kabir is a prophet. But Vidyapati is an artist and seems to me to carry out the Kabir doctrine of seeing the physical and spiritual as one thing.

I think 7/6 is a good price to charge for the Kabir volume. By the way, it is a pity that they don't have a committee to elect members. I proposed several in the autumn, and by not electing them we have already lost one year's subscription.

Yours sincerely,

William Rothenstein, as above.

TO WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

March 14, 1924

My dear Rothenstein:

I was very pleased to hear from you. We have here the largest series of photographs of Indian architecture and sculpture in the world, I believe, but of course these are only available for study here. I have thought of various large books on Indian art to be done some day, but I am not ready yet—there is much ground to be cleared. Meanwhile I will get prints made of a dozen or so of the photographs most likely to suit you, and send them on. I shall have to ask for \$85 each, but no doubt the publishers will attend to this. No doubt, too, you will get such material from the Archeological Survey negatives. Johnston and Hoffman also have some good ones. Anyhow, you may expect some from me in a few weeks. Is there anything in the Museum you are likely to need, I wonder? By the way, I am sending you my little new *Introduction to Indian Art*. If you review it somewhere . . . so much the better.

I am fairly well settled here. I have been once to India (Japan,

Java, Cambodia) and expect to go again soon. I like America, especially the open country, and go fishing in Maine every summer. I have been riding and fishing in the wild West, too, and like that still better.

I learnt of Arunachalam's death the same day your letter came.

I have taken up photography pretty thoroughly. In this connection, I have come to know and greatly admire Alfred Steiglitz and have been the means of incorporating 27 of his photographs in our Print Department. Yes, on the whole I have the life I like best (of what one can reasonably expect) here. Perhaps I would prefer an endowment enabling me to spend 10 years studying and photographing the Oriental Theatre! I have allowed myself to be divorced and have married a very beautiful and distinguished girl who amongst other things is familiar with Javanese dancing. Most of my books are out of print: but I have still much to say—growing more and more inclined to *exact* study rather than “appreciation”. I am deeply interested in old Hindi and work much at it, especially of late at the unpublished poems describing the Ragas and Raginis.

If sometime we get to London I should be glad to give a few lectures including some in which the main part would be an exposition of Javanese dance. By the way, I prepared a translation of Setyveld's *De Javaaniche Daniskunst* and believe he has been in correspondence with the I. S. regarding publication but have heard nothing definite.

Alice is in New York. Rohini in Philadelphia, Narada still in England. I have heard of and am glad of Simmond's success—well deserved indeed.

I do not know anything of Codrington (unless he be ex-Ceylon Civil Service) and hope he will become a serious “Indianist”. There is so much to be learnt still.

I must close—for in response to your enquiries I seem to have written all about myself. With kindest regards to you and Mrs Rothenstein.

Very sincerely,

William Rothenstein, as above.

Setyveld, *De Jevaaniche Daniskunst*; neither the author or the title could be further identified from the National Union Catalog.



*Introduction to Indian Art*, Madras, 1923.

The marriage referred to was to Stella Bloch, AKC's third wife. Alice refers to his second wife, and Rohini and Narada to the children by that marriage. Narada is deceased. Rohini Coomara is a professional musician and teaches cello in Mexico.

Simmond is not identified.

Codrington, presumably Kenneth de Burgh Codrington of the Ceylon Civil Service who later became an art historian.

TO ART NEWS

May–August 1939

Dear Madam:

You have kindly asked whether I should care to deal with the questions asked in your issue of March–April 1939. I find it very difficult to grasp their drift, and can only take them one by one.

Geometry and algebra are abstract arts in that they do not represent phenomena as such, but the forms on which phenomena are built ("forms" in the sense that "the soul is the form of the body"). A religious art is necessarily abstract because its thesis is "the invisible things of God" which can be represented in a likeness only by analogy, that is to say, by means of symbols. Symbolism is the representation of the reality of one order by the analogous reality of another order. There are degrees of abstraction: an anthropomorphic symbolism is unsuited, as St Thomas Aquinas remarks, to "those who can think of nothing nobler than bodies." If the artist uses models, it is as the material and not the essence of his art: if he uses them for their own sake and not merely as words are used to communicate a thesis, he is no longer an artist but only an illustrator. In the latter case, the free contemplative act of imagination having been omitted, only the servile operation remains; the same holds good for the archaist and the academician, or any mere imitator of styles for their own sake. Abstraction belongs to the very nature of art: an abstract art is "wrong" only when an abstract style is imitated for the sake of effect. We must not say, "Go to now, let us work abstractly": abstraction is necessitated by the artist's theme, or not at all.

I hardly know what can be meant by a "reaction to ideas of the past century". What has truth to do with "centuries"? The

only upright and consistent theory of art that I know of belongs to no one man, or time, or place, or form of faith: but there are times, and notably our own, which cover more than one "past century", when it has been forgotten.

Who has said that "art is *only* self-analytic", or even "analytic" in any sense? This is, perhaps, the modern view of art. I cannot see a connection between "self-analytic" and "abstract" art; this would be to be at the same time a nominalist and a realist, egoist and "In the spirit".

The artist "making a study of aesthetic laws" and the psychologist "thinking about thought" (the operations of that *psyche* of which Christ has said, "No man can be my disciple but and if he hate it"!) are hardly comparable. Both are artists if they write or speak well what they have to say. The artist, maker of things by art, is not supposed to think, but to *know*; to be in possession of his art as the engineer is in possession of his science. *Ars sine scientia nihil*; "aesthetic laws" can only men this *scientia*, with respect to which St Thomas Aquinas has remarked that "Art has fixed ends and ascertained means of operation." Thinking has to do with opinions, rather than with science. The artist entertains ideas: the psychologist forms opinions.

I agree that a communication of "sacred truths through visual interpretation" is most desirable, though it is by no means only a question of visual arts, but of all those which appeal to what St Thomas Aquinas calls "the most cognitive senses", ie, eye and ear. That it should be necessary to speak at all of the desirability of "communicating sacred truths through art" is a confession of departure from the order to the end, and proof that we cannot compromise with the aesthetic view of art—"aesthetic" being the equivalent of "materialistic", inasmuch as *aisthesis* means "sensation", and matter is that which can be "sensed". All traditional art, from the Stone Age until now (when this can hardly be said of any but folk arts and the arts of "savages") is at the same time functional *and* significant of the invisible things of God; that we have divorced function from meaning, discovering that man (as we conceive him) can after all live by bread alone, is proof that our conception of man is no longer that of a whole or holy man, but of a divided personality. It is not to be wondered that artists such as Eric Gill have been driven to put down the hammer and take up the

pen; for although we are convinced that the visual arts have only aesthetic values, we have not yet fully surrendered to the view that words are only charming sounds.

AKC

TO S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM

July 21, 1947

Dear Raja Singam:

I think you had better use the article on *art* as it is, with correction of spelling and punctuation in a few places. If you wish, you can also quote me as follows:

On the last page it is a pity that Sanjiva Dev uses the word *aestheticism* because this word, like *aesthete*, has always a bad meaning, which the words *aesthetic*, *aesthetics*, *aesthetician* do not necessarily have. So it is not true that I consider "Aestheticism to be the *sine qua non* in the daily life of man." What I say is what Ruskin said, that "Industry without art is brutality" or, as St Thomas Aquinas expressed it, "There can be no good uses without art." In his capacity as Creator, God is the archetype of the human artist as manufacturer; which is what is meant when art is called an "imitation of nature in her manner of operation", ie, of the Divine Nature. Bharatan Kumarappa's understanding of the place of art in human life—stated in his wise and splendid book, *Capitalism, Socialism or Villagism*—is far deeper than Gandhi-ji's, who is too ready to give expression to his own feelings on a matter on which he really knows almost nothing.

Very sincerely,

S. Durai Raja Singam, as on page 25.

Bharatan Kumarappa, *Capitalism, Socialism or Villagism*, Madras, 1946.

Sanjiva Dev, unidentified.



TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

November 6, 1945

Sir:

Apropos of Mr Douglas Newton's article in your issue of November 1st, I should like to point out that "art" is like "God", precisely in this respect, that it cannot be seen; all that we can see is *things made by art*, and hence properly called artifacts, and these are analogous to those effects, which are all that we can see of God. The art remains in the artist, regardless of the vicissitudes to which his works are subject; and I protest against the serious use of the term "art" by a writer who really means "works of art".

AKC

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

February 3, 1941

Sir:

In connection with Mr Viva's review of Professor Collingwood's *The Principles of Art* in your issue for January 21, kindly allow me to point out that the formula "Art is expression" by no means necessarily implies "expression of emotion". In the traditional aesthetic, art has to do with cognition, and is the expression, not primarily of emotion, but of a thesis; nor can we judge of a work of art without first knowing what it was that was to be expressed. From this point of view a well-made table and an "elegant equation" are really works of art: a work of art in which ornament exceeds the bounds of responsibility to its burden is called a sophistry; and the "beauty" of the work is the attractive aspect of its meaning or utility, and commensurate with the perfection of the expression of its purpose.

If works of art are colored by emotion and in turn moving, it is because they are brought into being not only *per artem*, but also *ex voluntate*. In other words, although on the one hand *ars sine scientia nihil*, it is also true that *mens sine desiderio non intelligit* (a truth that many "objective" scholars would do well to take to heart).

Mr Viva's whole discussion takes for granted a proposition ("Art is the expression of emotion") which very many of those who agree that art is expression could not accept; for these, historically the great majority, art is the expression of a thesis. I conclude with Quintillain's *Docti rationem componendi intelligunt etiam indocti voluptatem*.

AKC

TO ADE DE BETHUNE

July 26, 1943

Dear Miss Bethune:

Many thanks. I would like to keep the article. I was for a moment surprised by Maria as *Janua Coeli* (since Christ's words are, "I am the door"): but at once remembered that both Sun and Moon are the doors and no doubt it is in her lunar aspect Maria is the door.\*

By the way I do not think love of truth for truth's sake and beauty for beauty's sake (top of p 370 in the same issue of *Orate Fratres*) is sound Christian doctrine—which is that it is beauty which *summons* us to be good (and true)—and is therefore not an end in itself; while truth is to be sought in as much as "the truth shall make you free". I cannot see that *any* manifested value ought to be pursued for its own sake, but only as a pointer to an end beyond itself.

Very sincerely,

\* It would seem that here Dr Coomaraswamy was thinking primarily of the symbolism of Mary in her rôle as human mother of the incarnate Word. But Marian symbolism is both much broader and deeper than this considered in isolation; it involves, eg, 'the act of fecundation latent in eternity', a phrase of Eckhart which AKC quoted from time to time and which places Marian symbolism squarely *in divinis*—to which Dante alluded in his seemingly enigmatic address: "Virgin Mother, daughter of Thy Son." The human rôle of Mary implies an archetypal Principle, without which it would be inconceivable—literally. Dr Coomaraswamy himself made these points in other contexts.

Ade De Bethune, Newport, Rhode Island, USA; artist and author.

*Orate Fratres* was a Catholic journal devoted primarily to liturgical art; the name was changed later to *Worship*.

TO ADE DE BETHUNE

November 22, 1939

Dear Miss Bethune:

I have a rule against lending any books; primarily because mine is a reference library, containing only books I am apt to need at any time. However, I break it to send the pamphlets you refer to, if you will return them within ten days.

I think you ought to go into the matter a little more deeply. I don't think all the writers treat it from a profane point of view. It is of course an error to suppose that people are being asked to sacrifice something *real* in returning to severer forms, all that is real exists in these eminently, although with less human appeal. You are quite right about "emotion". *Movere* as a purpose of art originally meant to impel to corresponding *action*, not the inducing of "feelings". Christian art after the 13th century gradually substitutes feeling for knowledge as the thesis (see summary of Brehier's remarks, quoted in my "Traditional Conception of Ideal Portraiture" in the current issue of *Twice-a-Year*).

In plainchant there is no climax (characteristic also of religious music elsewhere): it is not imposing (because a *rite* before a *ceremony*): it does not represent violence of action. These are also characteristics of Romanesque [as distinct] from Gothic: Gothic being a decadence, a step on the way to the pathos and sentimentality of modern Christianity in which—in accordance with our inversion of the superiority of contemplation to action—ethics has become the end instead of the means of religion. The revolt of kings (against the Church), artists (against patrons), woman (against man) are all aspects of one and the same tendency.

I think you should own A Robertson, *The Interpretation of Plainchant*, Oxford, 1937 (see p 106, parallel with Byzantine plastic arts): and probably also Gastoue, *L'Art Grégorien* and *L'Eglise et la musique*. Cecil Gray, *History of Music*, has a good section on Plainchant. St Augustine's *De Musica* is important; see J. Hure, *Augustin musicien*, 1924.



I think also Gleizes, *Vers une connaissance plastique: la forme et l'histoire*.

I must say your own handwriting makes a handsome page!

Very sincerely,

PS: My article referred to above may be said to explain "lack of expression" in religious art, ie, lack of expression of human emotions, which lack is not a "privation" but a serenity and attitude of the kind that are implied in the phrase "serene highness".

Ade De Bethune, as above.

"The Traditional Conception of Ideal Portraiture", *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, VII, 1939; also in *Twice-a-Year*, II-IV, 1939-40; also in *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* London, 1943 (this was reprinted as *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, New York, 1956).

A Robertson, *The Interpretation of Plainchant*, Oxford, 1937.

Amédée Gastoué, *L'art grégorien* and *L'Eglise et la musique*, Paris, 1936.

Cecil Gray, *History of Music*, 1928 and 1935, New York.

Albert Gleizes, *Vers une conscience plastique: la forme et l'histoire*.

TO GEORGE SARTON

March 12, 1946

Dear George Sarton:

Thanks for the article on "portraits". I daresay you know that Indian (incl. Cambodian, etc) "portrait" statues are not intended to be "likenesses". Cf "The Traditional Conception of Ideal Portraiture" in my *Why Exhibit Works of Art?*, 1943, Ch VII . . . : cf Bonaventura *In Hexiamem*, col 12 n q: *melius videbo me in Deo quam in me ipso*.

AKC

Walt Whitman, "my . . . looks . . . are not me, myself."

George Sarton, page 13.

This was a handwritten postcard.

TO A. PHILIP MCMAHON

November 9, 1938

Dear Professor McMahon:

I take it for granted that you read my "Mediaeval Aesthetic" II in March *Art Bulletin*. I have no views of my own to propound, but those which I have made my own include:

Art is that norm by which things are made correctly (just as prudence is that norm by which things are done correctly), and after which they are called "artifacts" or "works of art". There can be an industry without art, but hardly absolutely. Art and beauty are not the same thing logically. Beauty is the attractive aspect of perfection; perfection is the maker's intention. The work of art is always occasional; beauty in any thing can only be a beauty in kind. Beauty is objective and does not depend on the spectator for its existence, but only for its recognition. There is no distinction in principle between natural and artificial, or physical and spiritual beauty. Beauty has nothing to do with taste. Beauty is not the same thing as aptitude, but cannot be apart from it; the converse does not hold, unless we mean by aptitude, a total propriety. What is beautiful in a given context may not appear to be so, ie, will be less attractive in another.

In application to your second paragraph: art and beauty are not the same thing, but should coincide in the artist, and must coincide if he has envisaged the work to be done correctly. The work of art can hardly ever be as beautiful as the art by which it was made, the degree of approximation depending on the receptivity of the material and the extent of the artist's manual skill. The work of art is always as beautiful as it ever was, in its original relations: but this beauty may be imperceptible to a spectator who cannot put back, let us say, the museum object, into its original context. If it is damaged, it is less beautiful (though we may *like* it better) than before, in the same sense that a one-legged man is by so much less a perfect man, by so much less than what he "ought" to be.

Art and aesthetic are totally different things. Art is (1) functional and (2) communicative. In all normal art these two are inseparable aspects, though one may predominate. In Sanskrit the one word *artha* denotes both value and meaning. The idea of a function without meaning or meaning without

value (typically modern as it may be) is the symptom of a divided personality. In such works of art as pies, the aesthetic aspect may predominate; but for the whole or metaphysical man is not exclusive even in such cases. Any work of art may produce sensations, pleasant or unpleasant, at different times and for different people. These sensations, as such, are simply reactions or passions, to be distinguished from life as an act. (Aristotle, *actis intellectus est vita*, ie, "vital operation" as St Thomas Aquinas interprets *vita* here). My own interest is primarily in the *art*, and only secondarily in the sensations it may evoke. I cannot imagine what interest such sensations, evoked in me by a work of art, or anything else, can have for other people. On the other hand, the intellectual pleasure derived from understanding a work of art is (1) not a *sens*-action and (2) should be the same for all, and therefore of interest to all. I do not like the definition of art with which you conclude paragraph 2 on p 7.

Professor Diez just wrote me regarding my "Symbolism of the Dome" (*IHQ*, XIV, 1938) (of which I send you a copy, which please return): "It is exactly the attitude towards art that warms my heart."

If this is any help, I shall be glad; if not, please provoke me to further comment.

Very sincerely,

A. Philip McMahon, Secretary of the College Art Association, publishers of the *Art Bulletin* and *Parnassus*.

"Symbolism of the Dome", *Indian Historical Quarterly*, XIV, 1938.

Professor Diez is not identified.

A paragraph from Professor McMahon's reply is given below in order to clarify the two following letters:

The problem before us as guides and interpreters of such objects (of art) is to acknowledge that all the contemporary classification called art really guarantees is patterns of sensation produced by a technique connected with drawing. Significance and value are discovered in such a work by a mind directed to it. Its proper meanings do not flow from the principles upon which the classification is established. These meanings have to be ascertained and in only a relatively few such objects may we expect to grasp them immediately and without a conscious effort.

AKC's answer follows:



TO A PHILIP MCMAHON

November 14, 1938

Dear Professor McMahon:

Many thanks for your letter. I know and revere of course Plotinus, but also have great admiration for the theory of art as formulated by the Latin fathers (Augustine, Bonaventura, Thomas, Eckhart, etc) and think it desirable to use these in connection with the interpretation of Mediaeval Art as such. I am in most thorough agreement with your last paragraph, which seems to me a most devastating criticism of our methods of "teaching art". My point was that the "aesthetic" view of art is by definition a "superficial" one and our notion of beauty only "skin deep".

Very sincerely,

A Philip McMahon, as above.

TO THE EDITOR OF PARNASSUS

Date not given

Dear Sir:

In Professor McMahon's very interesting and suggestive discussion of Plato's views on "art", he remarks that Plato approved of the fixed types of the Egyptian gods, but rejected the painters and sculptors who produced likenesses or worked according to their own imagining, "thus ruling out the whole concept of the creative imagination, on which modern criticism places so much emphasis." In other words, Plato endorses a certain kind of art: in effect, the art of those who employed the "adequate symbolism" of Plotinus, or depicted what Scholastic theory describes as "angelic images", viz, the ideas of things by which, as St Augustine says, we are enabled to judge of what they "ought to be like." I can see nothing different in Plato's point of view from that maintained in the Indian and mediaeval philosophies of art; according to the former, portraiture, empirical observation, and the representation of "what sticks to

the heart" (ie, the art that corresponds to the expression "I know what I like") are condemned as "not leading to heaven", while according to the latter, art has fixed purposes and ascertained means of operation. Nor would it be any exaggeration to say that the *actus primus* of the Egyptian, Indian or mediaeval artist implied an "accomplishment in mathematics and a dialectic"; for Christian symbolism, as Male expresses it, "is a calculus"; and even if in some cases the workman performing the *actus secundus* reproduced the traditional forms without a full comprehension of their significance, this in no way affects the nature of the art but only divides it between two "persons", the one "free" and the other "servile", in the mediaeval sense.

Now, as to "creative imagination"; what the modern critic generally means by this phrase is an idealisation, essentially a "creature image" or "phantasm", but improved according to the artist's *private* notion of what things "ought to be like"; this has nothing to do with "ideas", and from the older point of view is an entirely false concept of "creative imagination". This expression would have meant originally, and certainly in the Middle Ages and in India, not a creation of new forms, but the in-vention (finding out, coming upon, discovery) of the forms, ideas, or eternal reasons that are creative in their own right and by the mere fact of their being. Such invention depends upon internal vision, mediaeval *contemplatio*, Indian *dhyana*, certainly not on observation or deliberate "improvement", nor merely an abstraction. Mediaeval and Indian theory regarded the artist as creative in a very profound sense—in fact, as like God in so far as he embodied ideas in material ("similitude is with respect to the form"), the main distinction being not as regards the nature of the *actus primus*, but in the human artist's necessary recourse to an *actus secundus*. According to this theory, "art in its manner of operation imitates nature; not, of course 'nature' in the sense of 'environment', *natura naturata*, but *natura naturans*, *Creatrix*, *Deus*." The so-called "creative imagination" of the modern critic is then a phrase that merely refers to the artist's representation of something more conformable to his taste than what is actually present in the environment; "creative art" is not a mode of understanding, but only an "escape". A "creative art" of this kind by no means corresponds to the vision of ideas or creative principles that is represented in the

ancient gods; which as Blake remarked, were 'mathematical diagrams', or as they are called in India, *yantras*, that is "devices", and intended to be used as supports of a contemplative act in which the "critic", seeing the work of art, the accidental form, as starting point, recovers the idea expressed in it. Judgement, from this point of view, is defined in terms of the relation between the actual form of the material work and its essential form as it existed in the mind of the artist, whose manner of operation was *per verbum in intellectu conceptum*. Plato is indeed "actively hostile to what we now mean by art". On the one hand, this view when set in a larger historical and geographical perspective takes on a very "dated" and provincial aspect, while Plato's view appears to be that which humanity for the most part has endorsed.

AKC

Editor's note: The following series of letters on the 'True Philosophy of Art' were occasioned by a review in the *New English Weekly*, London 11 July 1940, of AKC's booklet, *The Christian and Oriental, or True, Philosophy of Art*, published in 1939 at Newport, Rhode Island. See Bibliography.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

October 3, 1940

Sir:

I appreciate Mr Herbert Read's discussion of my . . . *True Philosophy of Art* (in your issue of July 11). As to the "bomb", I agree that I ought not to have said "it is *only* bad as a work of art if it fails", etc. The statement is too elliptical. It seems to ignore the basic thesis that in valid art, function and significance would be "only logically but not really" separable. I fully agree that a bomb can be beautiful (a tin can filled with the necessary ingredients may be efficient, but it is not beautiful): this beauty will be an expression of the will to destroy, and like the beauty



of any other work of art, will be an invitation to use. I cannot agree that the "thesis" of the bomb is purely ballistic: that is its function, not its "thesis". Its "thesis" pertains to the art and philosophy of warfare, and is ultimately metaphysical; in this respect we cannot distinguish the bomb from any other weapon such as the sword or the arrow, which I have shown elsewhere are the material analogues of spiritual forces; the knight no more fights with a *mere sword* than he lives by "bread alone". Nor has the bomb's efficiency any ethical quality: it is made efficient, not by prudence, but by art; the ethical question is whether or not to make a bomb at all, and when this has been decided the adequacy of the bomb becomes the concern of the artist, whose only preoccupation is with the good of the work to be done, and not with any moral good.\*

As to "symbolism", a word I by all means propose to retain ("imagism" being not only "dated" but implying rather *le symbolisme qui cherche* than *le symbolisme qui sait*), I totally disagree that "each artist must create his own symbols." That is to make of art, not a universal language, but a Babel. It is precisely the individualism of modern art that has inevitably separated the patron (consumer) from the artist (producer); so that whereas Plato called the *consumer* the judge of art, *we* have to employ a host of professional *judges* to explain each artist separately; the appreciation (enjoyment) of art then becomes an affair of little cliques, and "industry is divorced from art."

Mr Read evidently thinks of symbols as "conventions"; but from the standpoint of the *philosophia perennis*, of which the "True Philosophy of Art" is an inseparable part; the validity of symbols depends upon the "absolute presupposition" (to use Professor Collingwood's phrase) of the existence of adequate analogies on all levels of reference and as between all degrees of reality. The symbol, then, is not a matter for choice, but for recognition. That symbols lose their significance is not quite true; the historical fact is that people may forget the meaning of the symbols they continue to employ as "art forms" or "orders". I am surprised and pleased to find that Mr Read agrees with me that, in thus becoming "art forms", the symbols have lost their vitality. The Greek "Egg and Dart" would be a good example. But [the fact] that symbolism has become a dead language for the majority (for whom "aesthetic reactions" suffice) is no more reason why "those who have

been educated as they ought" should not read them, than is the fact that the signs of higher mathematics are meaningless to most of us a reason for discarding them. The mathematical signs are, indeed, conventional; but even so, it would be ridiculous for every mathematician to distinguish himself by the invention of an entirely new set of signs. In order to be original it is not necessary to be novel, or even personal.

In conclusion, I venture to call attention to an article on "ornament" which appeared in the *Art Bulletin*, Vol XXI, 1939; in this article, I showed that the words meaning "ornament" or "decoration" in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and English all meant originally *equipment*. This basic fact is one that every student of the history of art should be required to digest. I should like also to mention my article, *De la mentalité primitif* in *Études Traditionnelles*, Vol 44, 1939. In this article, amongst other things, I discussed the symbolism of safety pins. The Special Number of the same journal for August–September, 1940, will be devoted to the symbolism of games.

AKC

\* On occasion and in order to make a case, Dr Coomaraswamy could isolate elements of an argument to the point of sophistry. It seems that this is one such rare case. The artist does not work as an artificer only, as AKC himself stated in a lecture (printed as Chap II in *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, see p 24):

An absolute distinction of art from prudence is made for purposes of logical understanding; but while we make this distinction, we must not forget the man is a whole man, and cannot be justified as such merely by what he makes; the artist works 'by art and willingly'. Even supposing that he avoids artistic sin, it is still essential to him as man to have had a right will, and so to have avoided moral sin.

Moreover, it is inadmissible to equate sword and bomb in the theory of warfare. The sword is a tool, the bomb a machine—an infernal machine. The sword can be and often is a thing of great beauty; a bomb excludes any participation in the divine quality of beauty by its essentially negative and indiscriminately destructive character. We must distinguish in any artifact between what is essential and what is accidental. Nor may we forget that man, as artist, has as his paradigm God the Creator; and this implies a degree of nobility in the works of any genuine artist.

Both 'Ornament' and 'Primitive Mentality' were republished in *Coomaraswamy: Selected Papers*, I, Bollingen Series, LXXXIX, Princeton, 1977; see Bibliography.

Herbert Read, art critic, teacher and museologist; was especially interested in modern art. He was later knighted.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

Date not given

Sir:

In further comment on the . . . *True Philosophy of Art*, I must take exception to Mr Read's statement in your issue of August 8, "language is a more beautiful material than metal." The choice of material has nothing to do with beauty, but is a matter only of propriety and taste or predilection. Beauty is the attractive aspect of perfection, and all perfection, approachable or attainable in human performance, is a perfection in some given kind; and as there are no degrees of perfection, it follows that one material is not as such more "beautiful" than any other (cf *Greater Hippias*, 291, "Gold is no more beautiful than wood"). We cannot as such say that green is more "beautiful" than red pigment, but only that we prefer one to the other: the use of green when red would be appropriate would be a cause of ugliness. In the same way, the "scale of grandeur and complexity" has nothing to do with beauty. From the point of view of the . . . *True Philosophy*, art is not an aesthetic, but a rhetorical activity, and while "pleasure perfects the operation", it becomes the sin of luxury if we divorce the pleasure from the operation and make it the sole end. I am surprised that Mr read should introduce matters of predilection (*de gustibus non est disputandum*) into any discussion of "art", which is the principle of manufacture, and of the artefact, which can be judged only in terms of the ratio of achievement to intention, regardless of what the intention may have been.

AKC



TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY LONDON

December 23, 1943

Sir:

I am astonished to find Mr Romney Green, with whose philosophy I am generally in cordial agreement, saying that "art is mainly an affair of instinct." Socrates, on the other hand, "could not give the name of art to anything irrational." While for the whole Middle Ages, "art is an intellectual virtue." Art is that kind of knowledge by which we know how to make whatever it has been decided should be made for a given purpose, and without which there can be no good use.

Were it merely or mainly a matter of instinct, then art would be merely or mainly a function of our animal nature, rather than of human nature as such. Works are traditionally supposed to provide for the needs of soul and body at one and the same time; and that means that they are to be at the same time useful and intelligible, *aptus et pulcher*.

Of expressions that are mainly instinctive one might cite a baby's crying or a lamb's gamboling. Of these, the former is not "music", nor the latter "dancing". Dancing, if we ignore such sensate cultures as our own, is a rational activity because the gestures are signs of things, and what is signified is something over and above the pleasures of the feelings (*De Ordine*, 34). Mr Green himself is willing to allow that a "significant" art must be significant *of* something. But an instinctive expression, however "revealing" it may be (of the expressor's own state of mind), cannot be described as "significant". To signify is to intend a given meaning, and this is an *act* of the mind: while any unintended submission to the pulls of instinct is not an act, but a passion.

AKC

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY LONDON

March 30, 1944

Sir:

In further reply to Mr Romney Green: the artist does not

work by "instinct", as bees do or as lambs gambol, but *per verbum in intellectu conceptum*. In other words, *ars sine scientia nihil*. Mr Hope's misunderstanding of the word "instinct" is private, and useless for the purposes of communicating with others.

What should be made is decided not by the artist but by the whole *man*, of whom the man as artist is only one aspect: the whole man's active life being governed by prudence as well as art. Works of art are "for good use". The artist knows *how* to make them, but the *man* knows *what* is needed.\*

AKC

\* See note on p 401.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

Undated

Sir:

I cannot help feeling that Mr Romney Green's use of the words "instinct" and "intellect" is very dangerous and confusing because it reverses the traditional usage, in which instincts are natural physical propensities of the outer man, and the (pure) intellect is that of the knowing inner man. By instinct and intellect Mr Green means what others would call "intuition" (or "inspiration") and "mentality". It is this mentality that has disrupted our civilisation, for instead of cooperating with the intuition, it has entered the service of the instincts, as Plato puts it. I think this will make Mr Green's meaning clear to those who use the traditional terms more exactly.

I should also like to protest against his remarks on human sacrifice. For if there is any eternally true value, it is that of human sacrifice. What he means to say is that a particular ritual form of human sacrifice is no longer convenient. In ritual human sacrifice the victim was always either actually, or in any case theoretically, a willing victim. The whole Christian edifice rests upon the theory of a human sacrifice, never to be atoned for except by those who sacrifice themselves. On the other hand, the outstanding crime of modern industrial cultures is

that they sacrifice men every day, not with any spiritual intention, but only the sacrificer's worldly benefit. I cannot but recall the story of the cannibal who, hearing of the great slaughter that occurs in modern wars, asked if the bodies were eaten, and being told that this was not done, exclaimed "then for whatever reason are so many killed?"

AKC

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

July 27, 1944

Sir:

I feel that there is not very much more to be said about art and instinct. I am far from failing to recognize the perfection that is achieved by instinctive operation, for example by bees, who do better in their way than we often do in ours. Their way and our way should be natural ways; and not therefore the same ways, for theirs is the nature of bees, and ours that of humanity. Instincts are forces by which the bees are in a manner compelled, and so with our own appetites and passions by which we are led to pursue immediate ends, whether for good or evil. In human art ends are foreseen and means chosen; the artist's working is deliberate and, I repeat, with Plato, that "one cannot give the name of art to anything irrational."

The whole matter has been admirably stated by Eric Gill, who says:

To produce works of art is natural to men, therefore works of art are, in a sense, themselves natural objects. Nature, the natural world, we must suppose to be the product of the fully deliberate will of God, therefore the natural world is itself a work of art. But though, in this apparent confusion, the definition of nature remains obscure, the thing called art emerges clearly. Art is skill; and that is what it has always been and what it has always been said to be. But it is a deliberate skill; and a work of art is the product of voluntary acts directed towards making. Hence art is a virtue of the intelligence—it is of the mind. Deliberation and volition are essential to the thing called Art. An involuntary act or an act



performed without intellection may be good or bad *in se*; it is not the work of an artist.

This is from his essay on "Clothing without Cloth". It will be seen that Gill distinguishes correctly between the *art* (which always remains in the artist) and the *work of art* produced *per artem* and *ex voluntate*. I would add that skill becomes a habit (*habitus*) or second nature; the artist who has acquired the habit of his art works easily, but we must not confuse this facility with that of the animal architects. The latter, however admirable, can only be called "artists", in a human sense, to the extent that they deliberate or solve problems as, for example, beavers and elephants are sometimes said to do. It may well be that the beginnings of human nature\* can be recognized in some of the more intelligent animals; but this does not mean that our own instinctive animal nature is our human nature.

AKC

\* Or rather, the glimmerings of intelligence.

Eric Gill, *Clothing without Cloths, an Essay on the Nude*, Berkshire, England, 1921.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

December 12, 1945

Sir:

I agree with Richard Hope about "abstraction". There is really very little in common between modern "abstract" art and the "primitive" art to which it sometimes bears a superficial resemblance; I have refused to call primitive art abstract or to admit that its forms are impoverished by their simplicity. We might as well remember that God is "simple". St Bonaventura's circle of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere is simple, indeed, but certainly not abstract. In almost the same sense, an algebraic formula is simple, much simpler than the totality of the arithmetic statements it resumes would be. So I say that Mr Hope is wrong in thinking that such a formula as  $X-X = 0$  is

meaningless. I find it very much the reverse. For what are  $X$  and  $-X$ ? Any or indefinitely all of the opposite things of which the world or any universe is necessarily made, or would not have extension in time and space. As Cusa says, the wall of Paradise itself is built of these contraries; while the God within, whom the mystics often call *nihil* or zero, is that in which all these contraries really cancel out and are no longer contraries.

This does not mean that an indefinite number of contraries added up would make or fill the "naught" He is, or any naught; it means that however many the contraries are, they are all potentially alive in the pleroma which "whosoever findeth, findeth no-thing and all things." In other words,  $X - X = 0$  is not an impoverished or "abstract" but a pregnant statement. For the same reasons in India the verbal designations of the mathematical or the metaphysical "naught" are also the designations of fullness that remains undiminished however many may be the units that we abstract from It. It is these singular "things", in all their detail, that are "abstracted from It; not the Naught from them! To make them cancel out is to return them to their source.

AKC

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

June 3, 1945

Sir:

Apropos of Imagination, discussed by Mr Williams in your issue of May 10, I think it is too often overlooked that the word itself is the equivalent of Iconography. To imagine is to form an image of an idea, a thing in itself invisible; and this kind of "imitation" is the proper work of art, to be distinguished from the studio practice of making "copies of copies". It presupposes, not observation, but contemplation. The embodiment of such concepts, fathered by *Nous* on *Aisthesis* in the actual material of sound or pigment, calls for knowledge and precision, and that is where the Romantics so often fall short, by their exclusive reliance on feeling; it is true that *mens sine desiderio non intelligit*, but also that *sine intellectu non desiderat*. He

who truly imagines does not so much know what he likes as he likes what he knows.

AKC

TO DR JOSEPH T. SHIPLEY

October 29, 1946

Dear Shipley:

The quotation is from Whitehead's *Religion in the Making*. Herbert Read gives the context. Whitehead says:

In this way emotion waits upon ritual; and then ritual repeated and elaborated for the sake of its attendant emotions. Mankind became artists in ritual. It was a tremendous discovery—how to excite emotions for their own sake, apart from imperious biological necessity. But emotions sensitize the organism. Thus the unintended effect was produced of sensitizing the human organism in a variety of ways diverse from what would have been produced by the necessary work of life. Mankind was started upon its adventures of curiosity and feeling.

This all seems to me to be intended quite seriously, but to be as nearly complete nonsense as possible; thoroughly sentimental.

It was thus, Herbert Read opines, that the arts came into their own! I am sorry to have neglected La Drière. This is the first year in my life that I haven't done my duty by correspondents. I simply haven't been able to . . . .

With kindest regards from

AKC

Dr Joseph T. Shipley, literatist and critic; see p 222.

Alfred North Whitehead, British-American philosopher, very influential; taught at Harvard University in the American phase of his career. As mathematician, collaborated with Bertrand Russell on *Principia Mathematica*. Herbert Read, critic, museologist and teacher of art; had strong interest in modern art. He was later knighted.



James Craig La Drière; it was probably the academic of this name to whom AKC referred; he taught comparative literature at Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., USA.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

March 13, 1941

Sir:

Mr Herbert Read "refuses to succeed as an artist at the expense of his morality" (Jan 16, 1941, p 147). Bravo! This was the basis of Plato's famous "censorship"; and as Cicero said, *Cum artifex, tum vir*. I should have thought that it had been demonstrated once for all, by Plato (not to mention other traditional forms of the *philosophia perennis*), that if we are to have "things fit for free men" made by art (and certainly many things now made only for sale are unfit for the use of free men), they must be *both* "correct", "true" or "beautiful" *and* also "useful" or "convenient" and are only then "wholesome". It was said by William Morris, too, that we ought not to possess anything not both beautiful and useful: and in fact all else is either "brutality" or "luxury". The artist is the judge of the work's truth, perfection or beauty, and being only concerned with the good of the work itself, will not normally (as the "manufacturer" or rather salesman may) offer the consumer anything but a "true" work of art. The *consumer*, on the other hand, requires the work for use, and is the judge of its value for good use. Are we not all consumers, and if so why shrink from putting the artist in his own place, and from judging the work by its *value*? By employing an artist at all we take it for granted that the work will be *pulcher*, and must decide for ourselves whether or not it is *aptus*.

AKC

TO PROFESSOR BERNARD CHAPMAN HEYL

May 6, 1946

Dear Professor Heyl:

Apropos your *New BEARINGS* . . . , p 146, I should like to say that I do not judge art by its content, and have never said that I did so. I made this very clear in my article on "Intention" in the *American Bookman* (no 1) where I pointed out that a morally reprehensible orator or writer might be a much better orator or writer than some morally admirable man, or vice versa as the case might be. I judge the work of art as much by whether the content is clearly expressed, ie, by the extent to which content and shape are fused into a unity. What I judge by the content is whether the work of art is of any value for me, physically or spiritually—and if not, then I have "no use for it", even though I can recognize its "accomplishment". If you should ever reprint, I hope you will be kind enough to bring your statement into line with my actual position.

As a Curator, it is my business to recognize works of art that are good of their kind, whatever that may be; but as an individual, there are some such that I would like to live with, others not. At the same time I think it very important for the understanding of ancient or exotic worlds of art not to presume that their makers had aesthetic preoccupations such as are now current, but to find out by various kinds of research what they were really up to; failing that, we fall into the pathetic fallacy.

Very sincerely,

Professor Bernard Chapman Heyl, author of a book entitled *New Bearings in Aesthetics and Art Criticism: a Study in Semantics and Evaluation*, New Haven, 1943. Also published in London the same year.

"Intention", *American Bookman*, I.

TO PROFESSORS W. K. WIMSAIT AND M. C. BEARDSLEY

September 4, 1946

Dear Professors Wimsatt and Beardsley:

Many thanks for sending me your paper on Intention. I will only say that I am only perfectly willing to agree that "the poet's aim (ie, intention) must be judged at the moment of the creative act" and even that in a prolonged act, the intention and the act move together; but while the contemporary intention may differ from what he had planned a week earlier, it is still most probable that his design a week or even much earlier, and much longer before the act will be a good indication at least of what the intention is likely to have been at the time of action. If the realisation of intention at any point is adequate, the work is so far artistically perfect.

I still see no artistic, but only moral, difference between the successful murder and the successful poem.\*

Very sincerely,

\* This, too, is much too elliptical as it stands. Dr Coomaraswamy often used the word *art* equivocally—at times in a vertical, platonic and fully traditional sense; at other times, he uses it in a horizontal sense meaning skill alone. Aristotle, e.g., uses the word more in the latter sense and even then distinguishes between artistic and moral sin, for it suggests that beauty has nothing to do with virtue. Art, or production by art, implies an intellectual operation, a contemplative act—as AKC often asserted. Now intellect, as distinct from reason, is concerned with pure truth; and as soon as one departs from truth, one departs from intellect, with all this implies for art. Not so with reason which, like an algebraic formula, can be adapted to almost any terms. Reason deals with relationships (as well as, indirectly, with truth), intellect with intrinsic natures and essences. The intrinsic nature of truth cannot be separated from the kindred quality of beauty, which is the splendor of the true. One can sin adroitly or maladroitly, but mere finnesse does not neutralize the evil—if anything, it adds to it. Similarly, a poem can be the product of little more than a facility with words. Beauty, a divine quality or attribute, cannot characterize something evil, trivial or wayward, except in a wholly accidental sense. A murder cannot be a beautiful act if words have any meaning.

Professor Monroe C. Beardsley and Professor Wilbun Kurtz Wimsatt, Jr., who exchanged correspondence with Dr Coomaraswamy on the notion of 'intention' in literary criticism.



TO ERIC GILL

June 1934

Dear Eric:

As to my book, there is one error I regret, namely my use of *consonantia*, in which I made a mistake. *Consonantia* is with reference to symmetry of parts, that kind of *order* in things which Augustine regarded as, together with their *unity*, the most evident *trace* of God in the world. I hope to be able to correct this in a later edition. I am working at more material from Scholastic sources—Maritain's book is really very insufficient and Mediaeval aesthetic has yet to be demonstrated, starting from the fundamental analogy between the divine artifices. This recognized analogy enables us to understand from expositions of "creation" and in connection with the magnificent doctrine of exemplarism (which goes back to neo-Platonic—not to say earlier sources) just what the mediaeval authors understood by operation *per artem*. I hope that at the same time that I collect this material to complete a long article on Vedic exemplarism—and as I have often said before, there can be no reason even from the most orthodox Christian point of view why the Christian philosopher should not fortify his position by use of material drawn from pagan sources, which is precisely what was done by the great doctors of Christian Europe long ago.

With regard to your other point, I think most likely the secret of a "balance between love and thought" centers, not in *not* loving things, but in loving them not as they are in themselves, but as they are more perfectly—bottoms included—in God. *Speculum aeternum mentes re videntium ducit in cognitionem omnium creatorum, quod rectuis bi cognoscunt quam alili* (Augustine). God is understood to know things not by their private essences, but by their forms (ideas), and it is precisely these forms that we ought to try to see and to imitate in our art, which is or ought to be an *angelic communication*.

Now I want to see if you can help me as follows: find a young man of the proper education who wants to earn a few pounds to make a translation for me of Aquinas' *Opusculum de pulchro et bono* which is a part of his commentary on Dionysius' *De divinis nominibus*; and perhaps also Aquinas' *Opusculum de*

*ente et essentia*. My Latin I am polishing up, but it is still laborious, and I would like a draught version at least of the *De pulchro*. I have in view the making of further articles on Scholastic aesthetic and insist that the study of mediaeval art in our universities is mostly play until the fundamental positions are considered.

With this request, I remain ever cordially,

Eric Gill, see p 82.

Jacques Maritain, most prominent of the Neo-Thomist philosophers and a prolific writer; a convert to Catholicism along with his wife, he was widely respected throughout the Catholic world.

'Vedic Exemplarism', originally published in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, I, 1936; republished in *Coomaraswamy: Selected Papers*, II, Bollingen Series LXXXIX, Princeton, 1977.

TO ERIC GILL

May 23, 1939

My dear Eric:

This is a short note in reply to yours of May 5. I've been away from the Museum for 3 weeks but expect to get back soon tho' I shall have lost a month: I got a facial cramp, due to a chill they say, and one consequence is a watering of the eyes that prevents reading with any comfort. However, I expect to be pretty near well by next week.

Mairet did speak of asking you to write on my stuff and I should have liked that. If Father Vann does it, he should be lent also the *Zalmoxis* article, the Vedanta article and Eckstein, which I had not sent to Mairet. I'm glad you like the "Biunity"; I thought I had sent you one and will do so next week. It was approved by Bowen who is a Professor at Catholic University here. My lecture at this university will be printed as a Stephens pamphlet at the same time as yours. Yes, as someone has remarked, Plato could not broadcast his stuff; but on the other hand, could we have *written* it? It is a question whether this absorption and preoccupation with *means* is not pretty dangerous. The South Sea Islanders did their carving with very simple

tools of stone and shell; when they were given good steel tools their craftsmanship went to pieces.

The chief new idea expressed in my lecture to be printed, I think is that *merely* functional art equates with "bread alone. . . ., husks that the swine did eat"—a "good", of course, but an insufficient good for *man*.

Affectionately,

Eric Gill, as above.

Philip Mairet, English friend of AKC and editor of the *New English Weekly*, London, to which AKC frequently contributed.

Father Gerald Vann, OP, see p 105.

TO MISS HILLA REBAY

August 29, 1947

Dear Miss Rebay:

Many thanks for yours of August 16. It is rather a shame if after 30 years of Curatorship in the Museum of Fine Arts (apart from previous experience) I have "no opportunity to see creative art"!

No one is more aware than I that "the realities of our existence are non-objective". This has always been the traditional doctrine; and I have cited so much in my books (*Why Exhibit Works of Art?* and *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought* regarding its application to art that I shall only refer here to Plato, *Rep* 510 D, E; *Laws* 931 A; *Tim* 51 E, 92; and the well known passage on mathematical beauty in *Philebus*, all to the effect that what true art "imitates" is never itself a visible form. But this does not mean that the work of art was to be looked upon merely as an aesthetic surface, provocative of feelings; it had to satisfy both mind *and* body. Some of the modern abstract works are, no doubt, "pleasing"; but that is not enough for a whole man, who is something more than a merely "aesthetic" animal. As for your words "still catering only to the senses", that is just what the modern emphasis on "aesthetic surfaces" as ends in themselves implies; such catering is precisely what mediaeval art has never done\* nor religious art



of any school except in Hellenistic and modern times, when it becomes sentimental, like the rest of modern art. The word "aesthetic" by definition has only to do with things perceptible to the sense.

As for why Dr Marquette mentioned my name to you, the enclosed may explain; it need not be returned, as it has already been set up, and will appear in my 70th birthday Festschrift, *Art and Thought*, to be published by Luzac this year.

The reproductions you kindly sent me I gave to our library, where they will be available to all students.

Very sincerely,

\* See, for example, Irish and Romanesque art generally; or reproductions in the Wiesbaden Mss, illustrating St Hildegarde's (12th century) visions. What you would probably dislike in these works is that they have a meaning. In as much as modern man is typically anti-intellectual, it is not surprising that appreciations of modern art such as those in the 'Hostess Reports' can be collected. I send you separately a reprint in which the two coloured reproductions might please you were it not for the fact that they, too, are 'about something'. (AKC's note)

Miss Hilla Rebay, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation.

*Why Exhibit Works of Art?*, London, 1943. See Bibliography.

*Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought*, London, 1946. See Bibliography.

*Art and Thought*, London, 1947; this was the Festschrift to which AKC referred.

TO MR L. HARRISON

December 17, 1946

Dear Mr Harrison:

Many thanks for your very kind letter which I read with pleasure. First let me say you will find some more material in *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought* . . . and some on dance and music in *The Mirror of Gesture* . . . ; a chapter on music in my *Dance of Shiva* (o p); and on the representations of (the ethos of) musical modes in my *Rajput Painting* (Oxford, 1914) or this Museum's *Catalog of the Indian Collections*, Vol V. Marco Pallis' *Peaks and Lamas* (Am ed at present o p) gives a very valuable discussion of the relation of the arts to society as a whole ( in

Tibet, but typical for any traditional society); cf also the chap, "Notes on Savage Art" in my *Figures of Speech* . . .

I think the point to be remarked is that just as we have isolated painting as something to be seen in Galleries, so we have isolated music as something to be heard in Halls; whereas it was in all traditional societies bound up with all the activities of life (as it still is in India). For this relation of music, drama and poetry to life as a whole, see in Beryl de Zoete and Walter Spies, *Dance Drama in Bali* (a wonderful book), Colin McPhee's *A House in Bali*. . . , and perhaps also my "Bugbear of Literacy" in *Asia Magazine* for February 1944; also Astrov, *The Winged Serpent*. . . , p 33 and *passim*. For India, also Fox Strangeways, *Music of Hindustan*, Oxford, 1914; and Danielou, *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales*, London, 1943; Kurt Sachs, *History of Music, East and West*. But these last you doubtless already know. I believe the New York Public Library is rather specialized in musical literature of these kinds. It would be impossible for me just now to think of writing about music, because of all the other work I am involved in, but why don't you do it yourself, using some of the material to be found in all sources?

For the principle of vocation generally, I might perhaps have also mentioned my *Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society*. . . New York, 1946.

Let me know if this helps, and if you wish write again.

Very sincerely,

Mr L. Harrison, *The New York Herald Tribune*.

*Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought*, AKC, London, 1946; see Bibliography.

*The Mirror of Gesture*, AKC and Gopal Kristnayya Duggirala, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1917; see Bibliography.

*Dance of Shiva*, AKC, numerous editions, see Bibliography.

*Rajput Painting*, AKC, Oxford, 1914; see Bibliography.

Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, numerous editions; see Bibliography.

Beryl de Zoete and Walter Spies, *Dance and Drama in Bali*, London, 1938.

Colin McPhee, *A House in Bali*, New York, 1946.

Margot Lusia Therese (Kröger) Askrov, *The Winged Serpent: an Anthology of American Indian Prose and Poetry*, New York, 1946.

Alain Daniélou, *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales*, London, 1943.

Kurt (or Curt) Sachs: Dr Coomaraswamy was apparently confused as to the title referred to here, for Dr Sachs is not credited with such a book in the

principal bibliographic sources. He was a German-American musicologist who wrote and published a number of books on the history of music. *The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society*, AKC, New York, 1946; see Bibliography.

'The Bugbear of Literacy', *Asia Magazine*, February 1944. This was also the title essay in a collection published under this title in London in 1949, and in the United States under the title *Am I My Brother's Keeper?*, New York, 1947.

TO MRS W. Q. SWART

March 15, 1933

Dear Madam:

There exists of course a vast literature on Indian art. We have here what is on the whole the best collection of Indian paintings in the world\*, and certainly the best general Indian collections and working library in America. I think it would be essential for you to spend a short time here before actually going to India. In the meantime I would suggest your looking up my article on "The Teaching of Drawing in Ceylon" in the *Ceylon National Review* for December 1906; Tagore, *L'Alpoue*, Paris, 1921; my "Introduction to the Art of Eastern Assi", *Open Court Magazine*, March 1932; and articles on Indian art in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Also such magazines as *Rupam*, nos 1-40, and the *Journal of Indian Art*. Also, Hadaway, *Illustrations of Metal Work in Brass and Copper*. . . .

We have no modern Indian paintings here. They are analogous to "Pre-Raphaelite" art in Europe; more significant as representing a revolution of taste and outlook than as everlasting works of art, though they have great charm and sensitiveness.

You would also find much material in my *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, 1908. For the rest I can only suggest you spend a few days here. I should be glad to assist you.

Very sincerely,

\*It is worth noting that Dr Coomaraswamy's own collection, amassed during the early years of his career when he was in India, formed the basis of outstanding holdings of the Boston Museum. When it became apparent that no satisfactory arrangements could be made to house the Coomaraswamy



collection in India, AKC brought them out of the country with him and eventually to the United States.

Mrs W. Q. Swart, New York, N Y, was a student at Columbia University School of Art and was thinking of going to India to teach art in a secondary school.

William S. Hadaway, *Illustrations of Metal Work in Brass and Copper*, Madras, 1913.

*Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* was AKC's first major book and was printed under his personal supervision at Essex House Press, Norman Chapel, Broad Campden, Gloucestershire, England between September 1907 and December 1908. A second edition was published by Pantheon Books, New York, 1956.

TO GEORGE SARTON

Date uncertain

Dear Sarton:

There are three important pieces of Islamic glass in the Museum of Fine Arts. The lamp of Karim al-Din, who retired in 723 AH (= 1323); and published in Gaston Wiet, *Musée Arabe, le Caire Catalogue général . . . lampes et bouteilles en verre émaillé*, Museum of Fine Arts *Bulletin*, January 1928, and with a revised translation of the inscriptions in the 1940 edition of the MFA *Handbook*. The glass globe was made for Saif al-din Arghun al-'Ala'i, who died in 748 AH (= 1347-8). It has been published by Mayer, *Saracenic Heraldry*, p 74; and also in MFA *Bulletin* for August 1912 and in *Eastern Art*, Vol II, p 245. A glass bottle bears no inscription.

There are over 300 important pieces of enamelled glass known. Wiet in his catalogue (1929) has published 118 glass objects and the majority of them are lamps, of which 87 can be dated by their inscriptions (see his Introduction). There are 19 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a collection second only to the Cairo Museum.

AKC

George Sarton, see page 13.

TO ROBIN FIELD

Date uncertain

My dear Robin:

To have a background for European art before 1300 and a way of understanding what happened after that, I think one should have read:

Plato, *Republic*, Gorgias, *Cartylus*, *Symposium* Plotinus, McKenna's 5 vol version

Hermes, at least Asclepius I in Scott's *Hermetica* Dionysius, translation published by SPCK

Svoboda, *L'Esthetique de Saint Augustin*

Augustine, *Confessions* and *De Doctrina Christiana*

St Thomas Aquinas, at least the first volume of the translation *Summa Theologica*

Meister Eckhart, 2 volumes translated by Pfeiffer [actually C de B Evans], London, 1924 and 1931

Longinus, *On the Sublime*

Also, of course, some of Aristotle, though you get this implicitly in St Thomas.

Books about the subject, I suggest:

F. M. Lund, *Ad Quadratum*, London, 1921

M. C. Ghyka, *Le Nombre d'or*, Gallimard, Paris, 1931

Albert Gleizes, *Vers une conscience plastique*, Paris

J. M. Bissen, *L'Exemplarisme divin selon Saint Bonaventure*, Librairie Philosophique, Paris, 1929

René Guénon, "Mythes, mystères et symboles" in *Etudes Traditionnelles*, Paris, Vol 40, 1935

AKC, "The Part of Art in Indian Life", in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol III, 1937

"Mediaeval Aesthetic", *Art Bulletin*, New York, XVII

Spinden, in *Brooklyn Museum Quarterly*, October 1935

Baldwin, *Mediaeval Rhetoric and Poetic*

Buchier, *L'Art chretien*

AKC, "The Nature of Buddhist Art" [this was AKC's Introduction to a collection of Indian and Ceylonese wall paintings by Benjamin Rowland, Jr, *ag v*]

You might read first, in the first group, Eckhart; and [first] in the second group, Guénon, Spinden and Lund.

I hope this will be of some help. Drop in again.

Very sincerely,

Robin Field was a member of the faculty of fine arts at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

We will not further identify most of these titles, as sufficient information is provided for the serious reader, except to note that Plotinus' *Enneads* are now available in a one volume edition (same translation); there have been additional translations of Dionysius in whole or in part; there have been more recent editions and/or translations of Eckhart, *Le Nombre d'or*, and Walter Scott's *Hermetica* (1985). "Mythes, mystères et symboles" by René Guénon appeared also as a chapter in his *Aperçus sur l'initiation* (Paris, 1946, 1975).

TO DR KWANG-WAN KIM

April 26, 1947

Dear Dr Kim:

It would take a very long letter to answer yours fully; it is a pity we cannot meet. I think it is important to impress on students that one can't have a "single volume" that will tell them all they need to know. However, for China I would recommend E. R. Hughes, *Chinese Philosophy in Classical Times* (Everymans Library), and René Guénon, *La Grande Triade* (this last being an exegesis of the implications of the character 𠄎). For India I would recommend René Guénon, *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines* (London, 1945), and my *Hinduism and Buddhism* (New York, 1943); Zimmer's *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* (1946, New York) and Nikhilananda, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (1942, New York); and (for Tibetan Buddhism) Marco Pallis' *Peaks and Lamas* (of which there are four English editions and one US). All these I should call indispensable. For Islam, all the works of R. A. Nicholson, especially *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge, England, 1921), *Diwan of Shams-i-Tabriz* (1898), and his translation of the *Mathnawi* of Jalalu'd-d-Din Rumi (Gibb Memorial Series); Frithjof Schuon, "Christianity and Islam" in



*The Arab World* (Vol I, No 3, New York, 1946); Margaret Smith, *Al-Ghazzali* (London, 1921); Gairdner, *Al-Ghazzali's Mishkat al-Anwar* (London, 1924); Fitzgerald, *Salaman and Absal and Bird Parliament* (Boston, 1899, or in his *Collected Works*); Demetra Vaka, *Heremlik* (Boston, 1911); and for the Qu'ran, the translation by Marmaduke Picthall. For Buddhism, you might use F. L. Woodward, *Some Sayings of the Buddha* (World Classics). Hare, *Woven Cadences* (Pali Text Society).

For India I ought to have mentioned also, Temple, *The Word of Lalla the Prophetess* (1924) and Dara Shikuh's *Majm'l Bahrein* (Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, 1929): these especially for Islam in relation to Hinduism.

Of my own writings, also "Recollection, Indian and Platonic", (*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Supplement 3, 1944); *Am I my Brother's Keeper?* (New York, 1947; material on "one philosophy"); my chapter in *The Asian Legacy* (New York, 1945); "On Being in One's Right Mind" in *Review of Religion*, VII, 1942, also, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government* [New Haven, 1942].

All such books and others, as you doubtless know, are most easily obtained from Orientalia (47 West 47th St, N Y).

I regard the book of Northrup as fundamentally unsound, though good in some parts. His distinctions are artificial; the so-called aesthetic approach (eg, in such expressions as "*grasping reality*") is a *linguistic* necessity, equally in E and W, and not a characteristic of either. Nor do I think that Georgia O'Keefe throws *any* light on the subject! The main point, however, [is] that he does not realize that his "differences" between E and W have nothing to do with geography, but with time; they are the same as the differences between the modern world and the mediaeval and ancient worlds in the West itself.

This leads me to one last remark. Viz, that one cannot effectively communicate Eastern religion and philosophy to people here who haven't already grasped some religious and metaphysical principles; in other words, to most Americans (Christians so-called included). Hence you have a right to demand of your students that as a condition of admission to the course they must have some acquaintance with Greek philosophy (especially Pythagorean, which is practically the same as Vedanta). All that means one should have studied the pre-Socratics, Plato, Philo, Plotinus, Dionysius, Bonaventura,

Aquinas, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Nicholas of Cusa, etc, etc, before attempting to understand the East. You might as well tell your students this, as a counsel of perfection.

Let me know how you get on with your course.

Very sincerely,

Dr Kwang-Wan Kim had been appointed to a teaching position at Simpson College, Indianola, Iowa, USA, and had written to AKC requesting a single book or a bibliography to be used in a course on Philosophy and Religion.

TO JOHN OSMAN

June 25, 1947

Dear Mr Osman:

I most certainly apologize for having neglected to send any kind of bibliography. Even now I cannot pretend to send you a complete guide, but I will list some essential books for India, and later ask you to let me know whether you mean also Islamic and Persian material.

The basic epitome of Indian religion and philosophy is, of course, the *Bhagavad Gita*; there are many, but no perfect translations; I prefer on the whole the one by Bhagavan Das and Mrs [Annie] Besant. For the Upanishads, Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (Oxford) has its uses, but it is not always accurate, and the Introduction hardly acceptable from the Hindu point of view; I prefer the freer but more understanding version by the Rev W. R. Teape, in his *The Secret Lore of India*. For the Brahmanas and Aranyakas, for which I have the highest respect, the following are good: Eggeling's *Satapatha Br* (5 vols in SBE; Kieth, *Rigveda Brahmanas* (Harvard Oriental Series, vol 25) and *Aitareya Aranyaka* (Oxford) and *Sankhayana Aranyaka* (Royal Asiatic Society, Oriental Translation Fund, RAS, London) and Oertel, *Jaîminiya Upanishad Brahmana* (in Journal of the American Oriental Society, 16) and Caland, *Pancavimsa Brahmana* (Calcutta, 1931) are all pretty good. All these sources at least should be in your library as well as my *Hinduism and Buddhism* (Philosophical Library, N. Y., 1943).

For a general introduction to the East and its problems I know nothing equal to Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*; Nikhilananda's *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (B. Y., Vedanta Centre) a classic, nearly in the same class as Zimmer, *Der Weg zum Selbst* (Rascher Verlag, Zurich) dealing with the still living Sri Ramana Maharsi.

For Indian sociology, Bhagavan Das, *The Science of Social Organization*; Bharatan Kumarappa, *Capitalism, Socialism or Villagism* (Shakti Karyalayam, Madras), my *Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society* (Orientalia, N. Y.) and A. M. Hocart, *Les Castes* (Paris). For Buddhism, *Dhammapada* (Pali Text Soc, "Minor Anthologies", 1931), Hare, *Woven Cadences. . . . Saddharma Pundarika* (SBE Vol XVI), Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (Luzac, London).

Hinduism further: G. U. Pope, *Tiruvacagam* (Oxford, 1900); R. C. Temple, *The Word of Lalla* (Cambridge, England 1924); [Rabindranath] Tagore, *One Hundred Poems of Kabir* (N. B.: Tagore's own writings are not very important); [Arthur] Avalon (= [Sir John] Woodroffe) *Shakti and Shakta* (and his other works published by Luzac, London [and later by Ganesh, Madras]. General: *The Cultural Heritage of India* (3 vols) [now 4 volumes]; *Legacy of India* and *Legacy of Islam* (both Oxford).

Drama, music, etc: Fox-Strangways, *Music of Hindustan* (Oxford); AKC and Duggirala, *Mirror of Gesture* (Weyhe, N. Y.); AKC, Chap 8 in *Asian Legacy* (John Day, N. Y.); Kieth, *Sanskrit Drama* (Oxford); De Zoet and Spies, *Dance Drama in Bali* (N. Y., very good); AKC, "Indian Dramatic Theory" (in *Dictionary of World Literature*); Daniélou, *Introduction to Indian Scales* (Royal India Society, London).

I would emphasize the difficulty for any student to understand Eastern culture unless he has a background of knowledge of the traditional philosophy and culture of Europe—pre-Socratics, Plato, Philo, Hermes, Gospels, Plotinus, Dionysius, Bonaventura, St Thomas, Eckhart, Ruysbroeck, Boehme.

Add the works of René Guénon (see in my *Am I My Brother's Keeper?*)

Also of great use would be Prof B Rowland's *Outline and Bibliographies of Indian Art* (Harvard); very fine is Stella Kramrich, *The Hindu Temple* (1946, Calcutta); on Yoga, Woods, *Yoga System of Patanjali* (Harvard Oriental Series, Vol 17); Daniélou, *Yoga: Method of Re-integration* (University



Books, N.Y.); Zimmer, *Kunstform und Yoga im Indischen Bildkunst* (Berlin, 1926). . .

Sincerely yours,

John Osman, assistant to the President of Southwestern University, Memphis, Tennessee, USA, had heard AKC speak at Kenyon College (Gambier, Ohio, USA) and had requested a list of books for his college's library as it was hoped to establish a program in Oriental studies.

As in the two previous letters, full bibliographic information is not provided because we believe the serious inquirer can find his way forward with the information that is provided. We may note, however, that in the fields represented in these three bibliographical inquiries much very good work has been done in the years since Dr Coomaraswamy's death. Readers wishing to pursue their reading in these areas are referred to the bibliographic section at the end of this volume.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

December 24, 1942

### Mind and Myth

Some recent discussions in this journal of instinct and intellect, together with various articles on myth and folklore, have prompted me to offer the following reflections.

Instincts are natural appetites, which move us to what seem to be, and may be, desirable ends; to behave instinctively is to behave passively, all reactions being in the strictest sense of the word passions. We must not confuse these appetitive reactions with acts of the will. The distinction is well known: "Acts of the sensitive appetite . . . are called passions; whereas acts of the will are not so called" (St Thomas Aquinas, *Sum Theol*, I.20.1 and 1); "the Spirit is *willing*, but the flesh is *weak*." Moreover, as Aristotle points out (*De anima* III.10) appetite may be right or wrong; desire as such always looks to the present, not considering consequences; only mind is always right.

In speaking of mind, however, it must be remembered that the traditional dicta always presuppose the distinction of "two minds", the one "apathetic" (ie, independent of pleasure-pain motivation), the other "pathetic" (ie, subject to appetitive persuasion); it is only the first mind (in Scholastic philosophy,

*intellectus vel spiritus*) that, just because it is disinterested, can judge of the extent to which an appetite (instinct) should be indulged, if the subject's real good, and not merely immediate pleasure, is to be served.

So, then Hermes (*Lib* xii.1.2-4) points out that "in the irrational animals, mind co-operates with the natural-instinct proper to each kind; but in men, Mind works against the natural-instincts. . . . So that those souls of which Mind takes command are illuminated by its light, and it works against their presumptions. . . . But those human souls which have not got Mind to guide them are in the same case as the souls of the irrational animals; in which mind co-operates (with the appetites), and gives free course to their desires; and such souls are swept along by the rush of appetite to the gratification of their desires . . . and are insatiable in their craving." From the same point of view, for Plato, the man who is governed by his impulses is "subject to himself", while he who governs them is "his own master" (*Laws*, 645; *Rep.* 431, etc).

The instinctive appetites of wild animals and of men whose lives are lived naturally (ie, in accordance with human nature) are usually healthy; one may say that natural selection has taken the place of Mind in setting a limit to the gratification of these appetites. But the appetites of civilized men are no longer reliable; the natural controls have been eliminated (by the "conquest of Nature"); and the appetites, exacerbated by the arts of advertisement, amount to unlimited wants, to which only the disinterested Mind can set reasonable bounds. Mr Romney Green is only able to defend the instincts (1) by forgetting that these are really appetites or wants and (2) because he is really thinking of those desires of which his Mind does, in fact, approve. Captain Ludovici, on the other hand, is entirely right in saying that our instincts must be regulated by a higher principle. If we are to trust our instincts, let us be sure that they are not just any instincts, but only those that are proper to Man, in the highest sense of the word.

I was much interested in Mr Nichol's review of Waley's translation, *Monkey*. He is very right in saying that it is characteristic of this kind of literature to "give the deepest significance in the most economical everyday form"; that is, in fact, one of the essential values of all adequate symbolism. Where, however, he is mistaken is in calling such a work "a



mine of popular fancy". That is just what it is not. The material of "folklore" should not be distinguished from that of myth, the "myth that is not my own, I had it from my mother", as Euripides said; which is not to say that my mother's mother made it. What we owe to the people themselves, and for which we cannot be too grateful in these dark ages of the mind, is not their lore, but its faithful transmission and preservation. The content of this lore, as some (though all too few) learned men have recognized, is *essentially* metaphysical, and only accidentally entertaining.

In the present case the "river", the "bridge" and the "boat" are universal symbols; they are found as such in the literature of the last three millenia and are probably of much greater antiquity. The episode quoted appears to be an echo of the *Mahakapi Jataka* ("The Great Monkey Birth-story"), in which the Bodhisattva (not Boddhi-, as Mr Nichols writes) is the King of the Monkeys, and makes of himself the bridge by which his people can cross over the flood of sensation to the farther shore of safety; and that is an echo of the older *Samhita* text in which Agni (who can be equated on the one hand with the Buddha and on the other with Christ) is besought to be "our thread, our bridge and our way", and "May we mount upon thy back"; while in the *Mabinogion* we have the parallel "He who would be your chief, let him be your bridge" (*A vo penn bit pont*, Story of Branwen), with reference to which Evola remarked that this was the *mot d'ordre* of King Arthur's chivalry. St Catherine of Sienna had a vision of Christ in the form of a bridge; and Rumi attributed to Christ the words "For the true believers I become a bridge across the sea". Already in the *Rg Veda* we find the expression "Himself the bridge, he speeds across the waters", with reference to the Sun, ie, Spirit. And so on for the other symbols: the Tripitaka is, of course, the well known designation of the *Nikayas* of the Pali Buddhist Canon, and here stands for "Scripture", taken out of its literal sense and given its higher meaning. The floating away of the dead body reminds that a catharsis, in the Platonic sense, ie, a separation of the soul from the body, or in Pauline terms, of the Spirit from the "soul", has taken place.

*Vox populi, vox Dei*: not because the word is theirs, but in that it *is* His, viz, the "Word of God", that we recognize in Scripture but overlook in the fairy-tale that we had from our



mother, and call a "superstition" as it is indeed in the primary sense of the word and *qua* "tradition", "that which has been handed on." Strzygowski wrote "He (ie, the undersigned) is altogether right when he says, 'The peasant may be unconscious and unaware, but that of which he is unconscious and unaware is in itself far superior to the empirical science and realistic art of the 'educated man', whose real ignorance is demonstrated by the fact that he studies and compares the data of folklore and 'mythology' without any more than the most ignorant peasant suspecting their real significance.' " (*JISOA* V, 59)

The truth is that the modern mind, hardened by its constant consideration of "the Bible as literature" (I prefer St Augustine's estimate, expressed in the words "O axe, hewing the rock"), could, if it would make the necessary intellectual effort, turn to our mythology and folk-lore and find there, for example in the heroic rescues of maidens from dragons or in (what is the same thing) the disenchantment of dragons by a kiss (since our own sensitive souls are the dragon, from which the Spirit is our Saviour), the whole story of the plan of redemption and its operation.

Although the above communication is not strictly a letter, but rather an invited one page editorial in the *New English Weekly*, it is included because it complements the correspondence AKC had with this journal.

TO LORD RAGLAN

July 14, 1938

Dear Lord Raglan:

Very many thanks for your letter. Most likely you cannot agree with my (traditional) point of view according to which the ritual action is a mimesis, repetition and continuation of "what was done in the beginning" (explicit statements to this effect can be cited at least as far back as the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, about the 8th century BC). We are nevertheless in full agreement that "the myth-teller is dealing with actions and symbols already known to him." It is these same actions that

are equally imitated in ritual. I do not accept a "mythmaker" in the modern sense of "author". The myth is transmitted deliberately, and thus "the actions are already known to the myth-teller", and the only question that can arise here is "whether he understands his material"; by the time myth has become romance, or euhemerised, this becomes more and more doubtful. How then was the *Urmythos* first known? Contemplatively; the *actus primus* being always a contemplation, after which the artist embodies the vision in material (colour, sound, gestures, etc).

My position is philosophically "realistic". That which is told, or rather referred to (the ultimate content being strictly inexpressible, though it can be experienced), is a reality apart from time, "seen" or "heard" contemplatively (or as if in a dream) by the so-called "myth-maker" (there is an old Indian story of a sage who failed to reach heaven just because he claimed authorship in what had as a matter of fact been revealed to him). This reality is expounded and outlined in the narrative myth or ritual. It remains for the contemporary auditor to become aware of it as a living experience, and not a matter of literary art alone, again contemplatively. This all implies a primordial revelation, or rather audition; which may be dated back, perhaps, to the Aurignacian.

Certainly, I do not believe that human sacrifice "originated in the imagination of some story-teller", using all these words in all their modern connotations. Traditionally, the creation of the world, whether thought of as a past or as a continuous event, is essentially a "human sacrifice"—the cosmic aspect of Deity being the "Universal Man", and creation a subdivision of this unity. This division is at the same time a voluntary sacrifice ("dividing Himself, He fills these worlds") and a passion ("into how many parts did they, the first sacrificers, or creators, divide Him?"). It is strictly in imitation of this subdivision that the bread is broken in the Christian sacrifice.

The treatment of the myths as historical is always a quite late and euhemeristic procedure. The veritable crucifixion, for example, is a cosmic extension of the Cross of Light. There has been a continuous transmission, not only publically of the myth *qua* narrative, but also in its real significances. The distinction is constantly made in Indian ritual books between those who merely participate in a rite, and those who

understand it; the former may receive temporal benefits, the latter only spiritual.

These points of view are probably quite unacceptable to you. But if they interest you at all, I do suggest your looking at René Guénon, "Le Rite et le Symbole", and "Mystères et Symboles" in *Le Voile d'Isis*, 40, 1935; and Frithjof Schuon, "Du Sacrifice" in *Études Traditionnelles* (new name of same magazine), April 1938.

Very sincerely,

PS: You say "the human body must come before the statue"; I am thinking (in Platonic fashion, if you like) of the *forma humanitatis* prior to either.

Lord Raglan; Fitzroy Richard Somerset, IV Baron Raglan, was educated to be a professional soldier and did serve as such but resigned his commission when his father died and he succeeded to the title. An anthropologist by interest and competence though not by formal training, his best known book was *The Hero* (London, 1936), in which he argued (in a classical *non sequitur*) that the great eponymous heroes never existed but were derived from ritual and drama to provide solace to men by giving some meaning to life. There are certain wholly external similarities between these views put forward by Lord Raglan and those of Dr Coomaraswamy who, on occasion, expressed doubts whether Buddhism and Christianity, eg, were historically true, or whether Jesus Christ and the Buddha ever existed. Actually, AKC believed that Jesus Christ and the Buddha and the religions they founded are so supremely true metaphysically that the question of their historicity is of little importance. We know, however, that AKC for a certainty held the doctrine that any and every possibility of manifestation necessarily involves an historical eventuation at its proper "cosmic moment"—"that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets", to use the Biblical idiom. All this, along with the letter itself, should be quite enough to show that any similarity between the views put forward by Lord Raglan and those held by Dr Coomaraswamy was no more than accidental and purely external, and that AKC was himself definitely "on the side of the angels". Lord Raglan's book, however, had the undoubted merit of pointing out the elements that are common in the histories of Solar Heroes. See the letters on myth that follow.



TO O. H. de A. WIJESSEKERA

Date uncertain

Dear Dr Wijesekera:

Many thanks for yours of November 26. Regarding Buddhist *Yakkha*: I regard this term, where treated in connection with *yakkhassa suddhi* as = *sappuriso* and the *attā hi attano nātha*, ie, as what remains a reality when all that *ne me so attā* has been eliminated.

Your program for a book of "vitalism" is very interesting, and covers a great deal of ground on which I have worked for many years. I am only a little doubtful whether you have a clear grasp of the real nature of "myth". I would hardly think of myths as "biological", rather as metaphysical. We are easily misled by their terms, which are necessarily those of experience, employed analogically. For example, the whole problem of solar myths cannot be treated intelligently unless we realize the distinction of "the sun whom all men see" from "the Sun whom few know with the mind" (AV), in Greek the distinction of Helios from Apollo. I am sending you a few papers in which I have discussed the nature of myths in connection with the study of particular cases. I would add that whole subject of *prāṇā* pertains to a traditional psychology which is anything but exclusively Indian; and also that *duo sunt in homine* may be called one of the most fundamental axioms of the universal and perennial philosophy wherever we find it, in China, India, Greece or Mediaeval Europe. I do not and cannot believe in an "evolution" of metaphysics.

Very sincerely,

Dr O. H. de A. Wijesekera was lecturer in Sanskrit at the University of Ceylon, Kandy.

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

June 17, 1941

Sir:

Apropos of Mr Ferrie's letter on Religion, Theology and

Myth, in your issue of May 22, may I remark that a myth is either true or worthless? From the Christian or any other traditional point of view, the proposition *credo quia incredible* is ridiculous. "The nature of faith . . . consists in knowledge alone" (St Thomas Aquinas, *Sum Theol* II-II.47.13 ad 2). *Crede ut intelligas, intellige ut credas* are inseparable operations. Super-natural no more means unnatural that super-essential means non-essential.

I can and do believe in the myth far more profoundly than in any historical event which may or may not have taken place. I do not disbelieve in what are called miracles; on the other hand, my "faith" would remain the same even if it could be proved that the events of the hero-tale never took place as related. "History" is the least convincing level of truth, the myth and the (genuine) fairy tale the most convincing. As Evola has put it, "the passage from a traditional mythology to a 'religion' is a humanistic decadence."

At the same time it must be remembered that even the myth is a symbol, a representation ("as in a glass darkly") of the reality that underlies all fact but never itself becomes a fact. Hence the *via negativa* to be followed when the ascent from lower to higher levels of reference has been made by the mythical *via affirmativa*. "Nothing true can be said of God"; it is only in this sense that the myth, although truer than any fact, is finally "not true". The myth is the highest form of truth that can be grasped by an intellect thinking in terms of subject and object; only when this duality has been overcome, so that there is no longer any distinction of knowing from being, can there be an immediate knowledge of reality.

Jacques Evola, *Rivolto Contro il Mondo Moderno*, Milan, 1934; see also later editions

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

November 20, 1941

Sir:

Those of your readers who have followed the discussion

on "Myth" in my own and other recent correspondence will be deeply interested in a book entitled *Das Verlorene Paradies*, by Edgar Daque, Munich, 1941, if it is accessible. I have not been able to see this work yet, but it is reviewed as follows in the Fall number of *Philosophical Abstracts*:

Man does not originate from the animal. He represents his own and distinct archaic form of organic nature. This human archetype never developed otherwise than [by] branching out in different human societies [ie, subspecies] which potentially take part in a supernatural sphere of reality. The archetype itself could never appear visibly in physical explicit nature and still less could it develop from a lower stage to a higher, because already in the 'nature of the beyond', in the world of 'first prototypes' it constitutes a spontaneous totality. This formation of the beyond, this metaphysical world is the 'paradise'. The knowledge of it is carried by the myth. The myth is the deepest knowledge that man has until to-day. (P. L. Krieger)

Assuming that by 'man' the author means the *forma humanitatis quae nunquam perit*, and not 'this man', this is in complete agreement with what I have intended to suggest. . . . Our trouble is that, like Boethius, we have 'forgotten who we are.'

TO THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, LONDON

November 5, 1942

Sir:

Mr Ross Nichols asks how the Myth "can at all acceptably be conveyed outside of a limited ring of literary sympathizers." Here the word "literary" is significant; for our literary world is, for the most part, coincident with what Professor Iredell Jenkins has so well termed the modern "world of impoverished reality". The Myth was once the treasured possession of the whole people, whether "illiterate" or literate, and this still holds good in a large part of the East; in Europe, however, where men have been "educated", it survives only precariously in folk-lore and fairy-tale, and is a dead museum specimen in literary circles, more concerned with human personalities and



self-expression than with Gods and Heroes. Living experience of mythic truth can be destroyed very quickly by public school or college education.

The answer to Mr Nichol's question lies, then, in our "aesthetics" and in our exaggerated valuation of "literature" almost without reference to its content; just as we pride ourselves upon our indifference to the theme of a painting, if we can admire it for other reasons. In other words, we are quite willing to go without our dinner, if only we can be charmed by the sweet music of the dinner bell, ie, the aesthetic surfaces that summon us to consider their theme. Our hedonistic conception of "literature" has come to serve us as a sort of shell to defend us from the truth of "scripture", "lest we should hear, and understand, and be converted." Not until art is redeemed from aesthetic interpretations, and it is once more realised that "beauty has to do with cognition", and only with emotion in the sense that *mens sine desiderio non intelligit*, will the Myth come to life again in the "literary" world.

AKC

TO PROFESSOR WARD

Undated

Dear Professor Ward:

Rumi, *Mathnawi*, VI, 4578 (Gibb Memorial News Series IV 6, p 511) compares the divine hero to "a hundred men concealed in a single man (as we should say, 'a host in himself'), a hundred bows and arrows concealed in a single blowpipe". The word is *naivak* . . . , for which I find in steingass' *Persian Dictionary*, amongst various meanings, "tube through which an arrow is projected". Rumi's date is 1207-1273 (*Mathnawi* about 1260). For Indra's "bolt" (*vajra*) we have two old Indian accounts of the mythological origin of the arrow\*, in one of which, which can hardly be later than 8th century BC, they are said to be the "slivers within it" (Indra's bolt) that were "separated from it" and became arrows. Cf *Taittiriya Samhita* VI.I.3.5.

AKC

\* Interestingly, an early name for Christ was *Chosen Arrow*.

Professor Ward cannot be further identified.

'The Blowpipe in Persia and India', *AKC American Anthropologist*, New Series, 45, 1943.

'The Symbolism of Archery', *AKC, Ars Islamica*, X, 1943.

TO DAVID WHITE

October 15, 1946

Dear Mr White:

There must be a great deal more literature on Myth than I know of. The main thing is to know the myths of the various peoples, and to learn to recognize their similarities. For this, perhaps, Lord Raglan's *The Hero* should be considered; and, of course, folk-tales in general—why are there so many versions of the same story all over the world? So one comes to think of an *Urmythos* of which all others are broken fragments; myths are the pattern that history exemplifies.

Of my own I suggest "Mind and Myth" in the *New English Weekly* of Dec. 24, 1942 (*vide supra*); "Literary Symbolism" in the *Dictionary of World Literature* (also in *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought* (Luzac, London, 1946). But I do commend J. A. Stewart, *Myths of Plato* (Macmillan 1905); Fritz Marti, "Religion, Philosophy and the College", *Review of Religion*, VII, 1942, 41 ff ("Men live by myths . . . they are no mere poetic inventions"—most serious students of myth emphasize that myths are not "inventions"); Wilbur Marshall Urban, *The Intelligible World*, 1929; Plato, *Theatetus* 144 D; with Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982 B; N. Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit*, 1935; E. Siecke, *Drachenkämpfe*, Leipzig, 1907 (p 60: *unglaublich, das heute noch jemand sich einbilden konnte, weitverbreitete Mythen Konnen ihre Entstehur der Erfindung eines einzelnen Dichters verstanden* (p 61) *ein Grundirrtu, zu glauben, der mythische Ausdruck sei allegorisch*; p 49, *die Sage ist von Gottermynthen ausgegangen*. Herzfeld in *Mitth aus Iran* 6, 1934, ridicules Fraser's interpretations of myths as "mistaken explanations of phenomena"; says *Die Geburt der Geschichte ist der Tod des Mythos*; lays down sequence, *mythos* = *ursprungliche Gottersage*, *Sage* = *heroische Stadium*, *legende* = *Stadium* in which myth is

mixed with lives of real men and so *hofisch und pseudo-historische*—all like my Myth, Epic, Romance; M. P. Nilsson, *Mycenean Origin of Greek Mythology*, 1932, “mythology can never be converted into history”. Read all the American Indian Origin Myths also. Also N. K. Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*.

As for the “history of literature”, from Beowulf to *Forever Amber* (sequence: metaphysics, tragedy, sensation) consider that in the last stage *tragedy is impossible*, nothing remains but the lovely and the horrible; tragedy is only possible where there is a conflict between what is and what ought to be, the Hero conquers or loses according to whether he can be what he ought. The same in the history of pictorial art, Christian and other; Picasso is not tragic, he only *depicts* the horrible. From things universally true to our curiosity about personalities, what a come-down—as Lodge used to say, “From the Stone Age until now, *quelle degradingolade!*”

I would rather count in Blake with the metaphysical poets than with the Romantics.

I am afraid this is a rather brief answer, but all I can manage now.

Very sincerely,

PS: Also Karl von Spiese, “Marksteine der Volkskunst” (*Jahrbuch für Historische Volkskunde* V, VI, Berlin, 1937); John Layard, *The Lady of the Hare*, 1945, and “The Incest Taboo and the Virgin Archetype”, in *Eranos Jahrbuch*, XII, 1945.

David White, Friends University, Wichita, Kansas, USA; see letter p 155.

TO PROFESSOR RAYMOND S. STITES

January 25, 1937

Dear Professor Raymond S. Stites:

I am having a photo of the bronze sent to you.

I can best explain my position about “genius” by saying that Wagner is typically a genius in my sense, but not Bach. I believe this really covers the ground.



No messiah is telling anything new or personal, but "fulfilling". Not only Christ, but also Buddha emphasizes this in their own words. I am not forgetting such expressions as "A new law I give unto you", but am referring to the whole attitude. The "new law" is that of the proceeding God as distinguished from the old Godhead, and in this sense every gospel is new, and at the same time this "new" is always the same "novelty", not a personal one. I use "genius", then, in the modern sense of a person extraordinarily gifted in expression of a personal experience. Those others such as Christ, Dante, Dionysius, etc, are rather "heroes" in the Greek sense.

I have no doubt that by a further definition of terms we might reach a clear agreement.

Many thanks for your letter,

Very sincerely

PS: If for example, to take an extravagant case, if anyone accused me of "genius", I should reply with Gleizes: *Mon art, je l'ai voulu un métier . . . ainsi, je pense de ne pas être humainement inutile.*

Professor Raymond S. Stites, Yellow Springs, Ohio, USA.

Albert Gleizes, French cubist painter and writer on art and religious themes.

TO PROFESSOR RAYMOND S. STITES

January 31, 1937

Dear Professor Stites:

If you will get *Études Traditionnelles* for Dec 1938, you will find an article by Guénon, "La Porte Etroite" in which the theory of the 7 rays of the sun is stated with great exactitude and simplicity.

AKC

Postcard to Professor Stites

The article in question was reproduced as chapter XLI in the posthumous

collection of René Guénon's studies on symbolism, *Symboles fondamentaux de la science sacrée*, Paris, 1962, reprinted 1982, and would be more accessible there.

TO PROFESSOR RAYMOND S. STITES

April 12, 1937

Dear Professor Stites:

I have not yet published on the Seven Rays of the Sun, except for a brief reference in a little book on *The Symbolism of the Dome* which is to be published by Harvard University Press soon. I have given a lecture at Ann Arbor on "Is Art a Superstition or a Way of Life?" and shall send you it when printed.

I do not by any means cite Bach as a genius—but as something better, a master craftsman. Wagner is a genius using the material for his own ends rather than for its own sake.

No doubt, the end of the road is beyond all art: because the reality is not in any likeness nor in any way expressible. In the meantime Plato (etc) does not require to look directly at the Sun before one has acquired the eagle-eye, but much rather to look directly at the shadows and *through* them at the Sun. Materialism and sentimentality imply a looking at the shadows for their own sake. The love of fine bodies is all right: but for those "who can think of nothing nobler than bodies" (St Thomas). One can *decide* to play with the kaleidoscopic pattern of things: or to see this as a pattern embroidered on a permanent ground. The metaphysical whole or holy man *cannot make* our kind of distinction between what a thing *is* and what it *means*; all values are traditionally at the same time substantial and transubstantial (the Eucharist preserves an isolated survival of this once universal point of view). To speak of the picture that is not in the colours does not destroy the colours but adds something to the definition of what can be experienced through the aesthetic surfaces. The whole man does not *only* feel (aesthetics) but also understands (cognition) *what* is expressed and to which he is *attracted* by the colours. I'm discussing all this once more in a long introduction to the forthcoming book by Rowland, of reproductions of Indian

frescoes—a discussion of the “Nature of Buddhist Art”. Art is not a luxury but a necessity.

Siva is by no means the only “guardian” of the arts. All are referred to divine sources, in various ways.

Very sincerely,

Raymond S. Stites, Yellow Springs, Ohio, USA.

‘The Symbolism of the Dome’ was actually published initially in the *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta, XIV, 1938, and then in *Coomaraswamy 1: Selected Papers, Traditional Art and Symbolism*. See Bibliography.

‘Is Art a Superstition or a Way of Life?’, *American Review*, New York, IX, 1937. The six lectures mentioned were published by John Stevens Pamphlets, Newport, Rhode Island USA, 1937.

Xmas Day 1943

I do not have all of Cusa’s works. The words *Mens sine desiderio non intelligit, et sine intellectu non desiderat* are from one of his sermons at Brixen, my source being E. Vansteenbergh, *Autour de la docte ignorance*, Münster, 1915, p 56. Cf Bonaventura, *Non est perfecta cognitio sine dilectione*, *I Sent*, d. 10, q. 1, q 2, fund 1 (see J-M Bissen, *L’Exemplarisme divin selon St Bonaventure*, Paris, 1929, p 95). . . . In other words, I suppose, the will is involved in all real knowing; we cannot know something in which we are not inter-est-ed.

Cordially,

Only this paragraph was available to the editors, with no indication of the addressee. It is included because of the importance of the citations and AKC’s conclusion, for in any traditional epistemology it is the whole man that knows and not only the cerebral part.

TO PROFESSOR H. H. ROWLEY

May 10, 1945

Dear Professor H. H. Rowley:

Many thanks for sending me your “Submission in Suffer-



ing", which I have been reading with much interest. I think it will conduce to clarification if we equate *karma* with *ananke* and *dharma* with *heimarmene*, "fortune" and "destiny", respectively. I am not sure that we ought to separate the idea of submission in suffering from that of submission in pleasure; these are contraries by which we ought never to be dis-tracted (see *Bhagavad Gita* II. 14, 38, 57). Our only reasonable attitude towards the contraries that fortune (by the ineluctable operation of mediate causes) brings upon us is one of *patience*; on the other hand, it is our part to *cooperate* with our *destiny*, if we are ever to reach our *destination*.

This patience under the slings of fortune is an *apatheia* in the original high meaning of the word—a not-being subject-to-pathological-states or "affections"; the man who is overcome by such being in fact *pathetic*. On this patience, cf Marcus Aurelius X. 28 "to the rational being [ie, obedient to the God and Daimon within him, V. 10] only has it been granted of freewill to yield to what befalls, whereas merely to yield is a matter of necessity, *anankaion*, for all"; cf Philo, LA III. 21 active and passive submission (commonly thought of as "Stoic" positions, but Marcus Aurelius and Philo are essentially Platonists, and only accidentally "Stoic").

Did I send you my "Recollection, Indian and Platonic"? If not, I will do so.

Very sincerely,

H. H. Rowley, see page 75.

TO THE REV PROFESSOR H. H. ROWLEY D.D.

July 8, 1946

Dear Rowley:

I was much interested in your *Unity of OT*, and fully agree that "sacrifice must bear a two-way traffic or none." The position you argue against is closely paralleled in that of the Orientalists who greatly overemphasize the opposition of ritual to gnosis in the Vedic tradition. I think this over-emphasis

arises from rationalistic misunderstanding of the use of rites, and the view of same as "hocus-pocus".

Reverting to my last letter, I might suggest a glance at Layard's preface to his *Stone, Men of Malekula* (1942) in which he speaks of "the megalithic ritual . . . as essentially a mystery in the sense in which the Church uses this word." Layard is himself both a first rate anthropologist but also profoundly a Christian (see his recent book, *The Lady of the Hare*).

With Kindest regards,

H. H. Rowley, see p 75.

John Layard, see correspondence, pp 42 and 226 ff.

*Hocus-pocus*: AKC was fully aware that this was a corruption, in more senses than one, of words from the most solemn part of the Roman Rite Mass (according to the Missal of Pope St Pius V), commonly referred to as the Tridentine Mass.

TO H. G. RAWLINSON

December 10, 1946

Dear Rawlinson:

By the way, apropos of "no sentience in Nirvana", the traditional doctrine is that there is no sentience after death, the body alone being an instrument of feeling—*Brhadar Up* 4.5.13, *Axiochus*, Diogenes Laertius, x. 64, 124, also in OT: "the dead know not anything."

Of course I cannot *at all* agree with your view of the Vedic sacrifice. In any case, the Buddha's (in S 1.169) substitution of internal sacrifice is only an echo of the old teachings about the Agnihotra in ŚA X, SB XI.5.6.3, SB X.5.4.16; cf already in RV VIII.70.3, na yajnair.

Very sincerely,

H. G. Rawlinson, see p 39.

The reader is referred again to Whitall Perry's remarks on pp v and vi (especiall the latter) regarding AKC's seeming blindness towards the posthumous states which for most souls intervene between the present life and final liberation. 'No sentience in Nirvana' is undoubtedly and even

necessarily true, given that Nirvana is an eternal pleroma. But to say or to imply that this can be true of all *post-mortem* states is to ignore Scripture and Tradition, or to artificially oppose one teaching to another. One need only consider the teachings on posthumous beatitude and suffering to be found in all traditions; or, more specifically, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which is full of sentence up to the celestial pilgrim's final illumination. Dr Coomaraswamy, of course, knew all this; we can only conclude that, for reasons best known to himself, he chose to ignore anything less than an absolutist perspective. It is true, however, that the Vedanta is 'connatural' with a kind of acosmism.

TO MRS PHILIP MAIRET

January 10, 1937

Dear Ethel Mary:

It was very good to hear from you again and to hear what you are doing. Your scheme of weaving history is very interesting. But I also think you ought to go deeper, that is in the sense of the "Little Mysteries" and the initiation of craftsmen (not that this can be restored artificially, but that it is an important part of "history"—the "secret history" of the Middle Ages, which is so much more relevant than the dated facts). . . . *Behind* all weaving lies the web of image-bearing cosmic light, the solar spider's web.

As to the essays, I will only say I will see if anything comes up to write for you—I am so deeply immersed in other work that I do not like to be taken off to write anything else, tho' I have to do it sometimes (I am giving 2 broadcasts on the use of art this month).

As to the "new expression" to which we are tending. Yes—because this is the end of the *Kali Yuga*, and every death must be followed by a resurrection, of which the early signs may be already perceptible. But this only takes place when the seed has *died*. There is no life in this present civilization, and *no* hope for it. For all its apparent progress it already smells to heaven of death. Hope, or rather certain expectation, is for what may be 500 years hence. What do we care about time? 3000 BC is just as real and present to me as now. In the "meanwhile", the most valuable thing is to preserve, as if in an ark, the always known truth, and to carry it over the flood.

I agree that probably the whole world will become communist



before the dawn.\* But this revolt of the proletariat, this democracy, is the last stage of remotion from likeness to the Kingdom of God, where all things are in due hierarchy and "order" proceeds not from below, but from above. History: (1) Supremacy of the spiritual authority (Brahmanism, for example) and union of spiritual and royal power (priest kings of ancient civilizations); (2) revolt of the royal power (*ksatriyas*, Junkers, the "Reformation"); (3) revolt of the economic power (bourgeoisie, industrialism); (4) revolt of the proletarian power (democracy, communism)—a descending scale.

In the midst of this, at all levels, it remains possible for the individual to work out his own salvation, and that is his first duty.

I would like once more to recommend to you (1) Eckhart (2) works of René Guénon, eg, to begin with *La Crise du monde moderne*; also the magazine *Études Traditionnelles* (where I also now often publish).

I have been occupied all winter and not yet printed, what may be little books (1) on Deification—Indian and St Bernard (2) on reincarnation and transmigration, two very different things, completely misinterpreted. Reincarnation is rebirth in one's children here and now. Transmigration is a temporal fashion of speaking of the omnipresence of the spirit, which as it were migrates from body to another. As to *deification*, the whole theme has been confused by an attachment to the "immortality of the soul". All esoteric Christian doctrine teaches, on the contrary, that the soul *must put itself to death*. The greatest sorrow of man should be—that he *is*. "Deification" is a matter of the transference of consciousness from the soul to the spirit; and thus only, in the words of St Paul, can we become "one spirit" with the Spirit. To reach this point the whole idea of the created soul over against a creating God must be outgrown—as Eckhart expresses it, it is God's will that we should become what He as God . . . is not—this is the *breaking through* (John, "I am the *door*"); as in Indian tradition, passing *through* the Sun, not merely basking in the light of the Sun, but to become a ray of the Sun—which brings us back to weaving, since the "rays" are the wrap of the Universe.

Best love from,  
Ananda

\*If this opinion seems excessive (and it does not necessarily refer to the 'official' part of the USSR), compare it with similar views independently arrived at and expressed in *The Tares and the Good Grain*, by Tage Lindbom. Lindbom, a Swede, was for many years an official in that country's marxist social democratic party, and he came to reject marxism for what he perceived to be its groundlessness and inner contradictions.

Ethel Mary was the first Mrs Ananda Coomaraswamy, and she later married Philip Mairet who had a long association with AKC; and the couple remained on amicable terms with him until the end of his life. Mairet edited the *New English Weekly*.

TO RAMA P. COOMARASWAMY

1944

My dear Rama:

The following is in response to your question about images: it says in Exodus xx, 4: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth",

BECAUSE God instructed Moses with definite directions, as in Exodus xxv, 9: "According to all that I (God) show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the patterns of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." Then God lists the things that are proper to *HIS TABERNACLE*: you know by now that *this world that we live in is in imitation of that world that God lives in*; now then God gives specific patterns the which Moses received and brought to his people, for the things that are proper for man to have and use. *Anything other than those specified by God are forbidden as subhuman*, at least as unworthy of men who worship God and take His and only His directions as their means of living.

Chapters 25 through 31 give the most wonderful description of what is suitable for God's followers to do and have. At one point Moses wonders who and how these things shall be made, and in Chapters 31-32, it says:

See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: (3) And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of *workmanship*, (4) to devise

cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, (5) and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. (6) and I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: *and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee:*

Now God has provided for His tabernacle on earth (our world) *all that is proper for man to have*, and the way to make these things, as He declared in Exodus xxxi-xxxii: by those who are "wise hearted", and filled with HIS "wisdom and skill".

*And only that* which is made by these "wise-hearted, and filled with HIS wisdom and skill" *can be rightly called art*. You ought to know this, you who have often heard this discussed.

NOW AS TO WHY ONE SHALL OR SHALL NOT WORSHIP AN IMAGE: *All works of art are images of something*; images are reminders, representations and signs. It all depends on whether a man on seeing an image of God *is such a man as can be reminded by it of God, or is he such a man as to be able only to see the image (or clay) and not what it is supposed to remind him of?* It would indeed be dangerous to allow such a man to have an image of God, for he would mistake the stone, paint-pigment, the wood, whatsoever the image is made of for his God. (That's rightly called the worship of an image, or graven image.)

But there are those who use the image as a reminder, *and only when they are in the presence of the real thing no longer need the reminder.*

There is the matter of importance; rightly used, images, like every other thing on earth, have their value, but to use the image in place of the real thing, as if it were the real thing, is *wrong and forbidden*. EXAMPLE: When you travel by motor car, you see route numbers on the way, these are symbols or images; you reach your destination, you do not take up all the signs along the way (other people likewise use them), or do you take up the boat or the bridge when you have crossed to the other side of the river? You use these things when you need them, likewise images; but it would be silly to say they are no use *while you are still crossing over!*

In India, it is the custom to desecrate all the clay images of the



household on Thursdays, and on Fridays you go to the bazaar and buy fresh clay images which are taken to the Ganges and there consecrated and made holy; these are then used in the average home for less than a week, and once more the same ceremony, of discarding and acquiring new images, is enacted; this is a wonderful method of keeping people from getting attached to the clay in the clay-image, *but to use it as a reminder or sign of the divinity it represents.*

Śankaracharya was a very great scholar in India and he too used images in the way above mentioned. Once he felt embarrassed, he thought it was childish; however, this is what he concluded: "God, be pleased to forgive me for worshipping You in this Temple through this Image, I, who know You have no special abode here, but are everywhere, and that you have no special form, for You are not this image nor are You anything."

This does not mean that he intended to change his manner of worship, but it is an explanation that he understood that *the image was for him only a sign post.*

All the religions of the world except the Jews and Mohammedans make use of Icons, or images, or symbols.

The Jews and the Mohammedans forbade it because they felt that the real thing should not be represented lest on the "Day of Judgement" when God calls all the dead to rise, these things will fail to come to life. And they are very strong on God being the only and the very creator, and all the things that men make shall not imitate the things that God made, but shall distinctly look like something else, ie, that the symbol shall look like a mathematical symbol or sign, so that the mistake of the imitation for the real thing should not have the slightest chance for existing. This is the way they wish to avoid error. But for those *who wish to risk the true use, and purpose to take great care not to make the wrong use of images, for them also it is right that they shall have the freedom to do what is right, and should they fail, it is at their own peril.* And they shall, of course, take the consequences, should they make the error of thinking that the clay is other than a sign post for the mind to use on its way to concentration or *contemplatio* or *Yoga*.

All the religions (as I started to say) have permitted the use of icons or symbols, made in stone, plaster, paint, wood, words (which are praises of the Lord) or in any other materials

whatever, with the definite restrictions, that those things shall be made according to the *pattern showed thee* and by those who are "wise-hearted" and filled with the "wisdom and skill" that God graces man with.

For religions other than the Christian this expression is used: "Imitation of the Eternal Idea", in other words, exactly what the Christians say. When you read Plato, I hope in the original, you will meet every Christian idea (including the above), but cut more sharply and stated more poignantly. For the Greeks of Plato's time were a people who could stand for and who could love Christ for His ferocity, but we want to make Him meek and mild, a smooth and handsome youth; in other words, we wish to make Christ according to our idea of what He ought to be; it is so much easier than to try to come up to Him, and you know we like short cuts, even to heaven. *But I need hardly add that although there are short cuts to Heaven, these cannot be discovered by a people who adore as their "Culture-Heroes" the makers of refrigeration boxes and labor saving devices, as well as man killing implements . . . .*

Rama P. Coomaraswamy, Ananda Coomaraswamy's son (by Doña Luisa Coomaraswamy) who was 14 years old at the time. It is this, of course, which explains the atypical tone of this letter. Another unusual point is the use of the term Mohammadan, as this is incorrect and a usage that AKC objected to, the correct term being *Muslim*.

TO RAMA P. COOMARASWAMY

• June 24, 1947

My dear Rama:

I am afraid my long letter about caste, etc, cannot have reached you. To perform *śrāddha*, or have it performed for one by a Brahman, does not make one a Brahman. Our family is Vellala; this is not a well known caste name in North India, but any Tamil you may run across will know it. We do wear the *yajñopavita*; I have received *upanayana* from a Brahman in the Punjab, and shall resume wearing the thread when we come to India. I suggested that you should accept the offer to give you *upanayana* in Bengal, but if you did not do so, there will be

other opportunities, and meantime you can always live like a Hindu, and according to Brahman standards and ways . . . .

Our people are *Vellalas*, originally from Tanjore, but long settled in N. Ceylon (Jaffna) and then also in Colombo. They are *Saivas*; they are given *upanayana* and wear the thread. We cremate the dead and take the ashes to Benares. We keep up a hereditary connection with *Paṇḍas* at Allahabad. Our people are usually vegetarians, and employ Brahman cooks. I once performed by father's *śrāddha*, but otherwise this has been done by my other members of the family in Ceylon.

With best love,

Rama P. Coomaraswamy, as above; at this time he was travelling in India and the Tibetan borderlands with Marco Pallis.

*Yajñopavita* is the sacred thread which all the 'twice born', ie, the three uppercastes, among the Hindus begin wearing when they come of age. The rite that confers this is called *upanayana*.

*Śrāddha* is a service for the dead.

TO RAMA P. COOMARASWAMY

June 25, 1947

My dear Rama:

In two recent letters, I think I mentioned *numdah* as material for *kurtas*; I should have said *paṭṭu* (*patoo*), as *numdah* is a felt used only for rugs. There are many nice handmade woolen materials obtainable in Punjab.

Also, I think I wrote *śraddhā*; I should have said *śrāddha*. The former means "faith", the latter denotes the rite. One should be careful to be accurate not only in translation, but also in transliteration; to use *oo* for *u*, and so forth is slipshod.

Regarding *śuddha*, "pure" (foods, etc, see in BG ch xviii). Our inner and outer lives are bound up together, so that physical and spiritual purity are intimately related. Ritual purity is a discipline, something to be done *and* understood. Do not think of it as a mechanical formality. In Iceland, "no one turned his face unwashed to Holyfell", and this fastidious instinct towards sacred things can be found all over the world. It may be possible, but it is



not likely, to be fastidious inwardly only. Those who are crude outwardly are likely to be crude inwardly. All "means" (Skr = *upaya*, rites, imagery, etc) are indispensable supports, *until* one has reached the "end of the road", which is still a long, long way off for those are most apt to believe they can do without them!

Love,  
Father

Rama P. Coomaraswamy, as above.

TO DOÑA LUISA COOMARASWAMY

November 23, 1935

Darling:

It certainly was a relief to hear from you after 20 days! I am looking forward to hearing more about Gurukul. As to magic, one must remember that though prevalent, it is by no means encouraged for Wayfarers, but is a "hindrance". I am just halfway through correcting proof (mainly checking some hundred of references) in "Angel and Titan" which is at last to appear, taking 47 pp of JAOS. As to Dr Ross, he made no proper arrangements for payment, and I have to prove the debt. (I have statements from Mr Hawes, Edgar Parker, and Mr Holmes, etc) and in any case the estate will take some time to settle; I shall be glad when it is done—this month I couldn't have paid Holmes but for \$50 received from College Art Association for the Introduction I recently sent you (I hope you like it, I think it quite right for its purpose). Aaron was here last night, we had a great talk. At the close, discussing circles, he said "a circle has no ends"; on the contrary I said, "its ends coincide"; he saw the point but finds it hard to think in that fashion. I hope several long letters sent a week or two back reach you (addressed to Rajpur). Did I mention that Manu's daughter is called "Rib" in X, 82, 23 [presumably the reference is to the *Rig Veda*]? By the way, Aaron's reply was "That's what my father would have said"—I mean about the circles. They both (Warners) ask to be remembered. We are beginning to have light snow. I imagine it's quite pleasantly cool at

Hardwar. Also it must be a really Hindu place, with pilgrims coming and going. I may write a joint article with Prof Furfey, of Catholic Univ, Washington, on enclosed lines. I spent \$150 this month, and as I said am hoping that you can save all above \$100 against Spring and Summer. I think as I said last time, you should probably stay there till end of April and then go to France for a month or two. I think your dream of climbing the *pravat* was good; a variant of the ladder symbolism, and analogous to the "upstream" (*pratikūla*, *pratisota*, etc) journey; uphill, countercurrent. When it gets cold up there you will be able to get nice *pattu* to make up. I shouldn't worry about *what* you can read in the RV; the important thing is to get command of the vocabulary and style, we can do the rest here. It comes infinitely easier to me now than a year ago, and by contrast the Upaniṣads and BG are no effort at all; but of course "classical" Skr, which most people know better, would be harder for us. By the way, Nala-Damayantī = Manas and Vāc, etc. As you know, there is only one story to be told. She holding her *svyamvara*, "own choice" is the *patim icchantī strī* of RV and Brahmanas.

I wrote two days ago "Death is immortal, Life mortal", today found SB X, 5,2,3: "Death is the Person in the Sun, and the Light that shines is what is alive; therefore, Death does not die, for he is within, therefore he is not seen, for he is within what is alive." NB: the best translation of *amṛta* is not immortal, but simply living as contrasted with dying. The devas are *alive*, man is so to speak "dead and alive", mortal, corruptible. *Amṛta* rarely means "immortal" (Bloomfield, I must say, already recognized this, but many have forgotten it). Buddhist Mara = Mrtya = Gandharva = Kamadeva = Eros; hermeneutically *Amor* has been interpreted as *a-mors*. Love-and-Death unifies; Life divides.

With Thomas, "the state of glory is not under the Sun", cf SB X, 5,1,5: "Whatsoever is on this side of the Sun, all that is possessed by Death". It is through the Sun that one escapes; "no man cometh to the (Dragon-) Father save through Me."

26th

Your second letter from Gurukula today. Not awfully enthusiastic. It is difficult about Ram. I don't see how we can

possibly sacrifice our time and work to the extent it would involve here. I was at a good school, Wycliffe College, in the country in England, now a public school and in many respects improved, probable cost about \$750 a year. But then it would be perfectly ordinary, it would take him so long to outgrow it all, like it has taken me 40 years to go back to Latin for example. It is a terrible thing any way to think of anyone going through an education, it seems interminable. I think he would have more at the Gurukul. After all it has Dayananda's tradition behind it, and he was a *very* great man, and a very great Vedic scholar. Aurobindo Ghose,\* of Pondicherry, is also a great man; I have some of his books here, and you may have come across some there. Great men have developed, and will still develop under Indian conditions, however slipshod etc.

As to adoption, if impossible in India, that's that, perhaps we can arrange it here. I daresay Aaron could wrangle it for us. I have just completed a week's real *tapas* and *sramana*, on 47 pp of "Angel and Titan", checking *several hundred* references; quite exhausting, you could have helped if you had been here! The paper is so long and detailed as to be almost unreadable. It's almost a book about RV, but you will enjoy it anyway.

Helen Johnson I have not met, but is a good scholar of Jaina Skr, translating Hemacandra's *Trisastisalākāpurasacaritra*. As to fighting in RV, it is all "within you", of course. There are several passages in RV emphasizing that the whole business is *māyā* and *līlā*, that Indra never had and never will have any enemy, and moreover, making it clear that all the tools and weapons they speak of are *nāmāni*, ie, "ideas". But RV as it stands (like *Bh Gita*) is a book for Ksatriyas and therefore exoteric and *karmakānda* essentially, with only here and there *jñānakānda* indications; it takes for granted all that is in the Upaniṣads, which represent the contemporary esoteric part, but published later, and therefore showing some linguistic difference. In any case there is an absolute consistency in the orthodox teaching throughout, nothing new after RV, but some expansion and so to speak underlining of certain meanings. One has to take the whole and see its consistency; there is no one word or statement that can be omitted, each (even if only said once) is essential; like the visual image seen in *dhyāna* which fills the whole field and consists of parts all equally inevitable.





Ananda K. Coomaraswamy at 70 years

*Bh Gita* is of course the same battle; all these battles are exoterically external, esoterically within you; and true both ways, for they are really external for those who see externally. If you really understand RV, Upaniṣads are unnecessary. The great mistake most people make is to begin with the Ups and Buddhism; if one began with RV (as one was supposed to do in India) there would be no latter "mystery", but all the later doctrine would be "of course". The Ups are magnificent, but all their *tejas* is Vedic, not a great new discovery. No more new, and perhaps even less new, than Eckhart. As for the stupor of those you meet, who are *āsayamānah*, *suṣupānah*, *abridhyah*, *jīryyā mūrah*, what they need is to be awakened (*budh*), to be made *punar yuvanam*, *punar sūtah*, "quick" (*amṛtaḥ*) who are now "dead" (*martyah*). NB: *amṛta* in RV is generally "alive", rarely "immortal", if indeed ever; and being mortal does not refer to the fact that one dies after full term of life, but to the nature of our "life", which is a matter of constant deaths, day after day.

Dearest love from,  
Ananda

Doña Luisa Coomaraswamy, AKC's wife, was in India studying Sanskrit when this letter was written.

TO WALTER SHEWRING

August 6, 1947

My dear Walter Shewring:

. . . I'm sorry to hear that like myself you are slowed up. No doubt these later days have drained us all of strength, in spite of ourselves and of such detachment as we may have acquired. Only this week I received a very tragic letter from a man who I had thought of as a powerful healer of others—and now seeks healing for himself.

I think you know we—my wife and I—plan to retire to comparative solitude somewhere in N India not later than the end of 1948. . . .

No doubt the whole world is "in for" a long period of

suffering for its sins, and we are *all* involved, some more, some less, in the earning of such retribution—which would be true enough *even* from a secular point of view. . . .

Sincerely,

Walter Shewring, identified on page 23.



## FAREWEL ADDRESS

It seems fitting to conclude this selection from the correspondence of Dr Ananda K. Coomaraswamy with this farewell speech read at a dinner arranged by some of his close friends and held at the Harvard Club in Boston on August 22, 1947.

I am more than honoured—somewhat, indeed, overcome—by your kindness in being here tonight, by the messages that have been read, and by the presentation of the *Festschrift* edited by Bharatha Iyer. I should like to recall the names of four men who might have been present had they been living: Dr Denham W. Ross, Dr John Lodge, Dr Lucien Scherman, and Professor James H. Woods, to all of whom I am indebted. The formation of the Indian collections in the Museum of Fine Arts was almost wholly due to the initiative of Dr Denham Ross; Dr Lodge, who wrote little, will be remembered for his work in Boston and Washington and also, perhaps, for his aphorism, "From the Stone Age until now, *quelle degradingolade*". I still hope to complete a work on *Reincarnation* with which Dr Scherman charged me not long before his death; and Professor Woods was one of those teachers who can never be replaced.

More than half of my active life has been spent in Boston. I want to express my gratitude in the first place to the Directors and Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, who have always left me entirely free to carry on research not only in the field of Indian art, but at the same time in the wider field of the whole traditional theory of art and the relation of man to his work, and in the fields of comparative religion and metaphysics to which the problems of iconography naturally lead. I am grateful also to the American Oriental Society whose editors, however much they differed from me "by temperament and training", as Professor Norman Brown once said, have always felt that I had "a right to be heard", and have allowed me to be heard. And all this despite the fact that such studies as I have made necessarily lead me back to the enunciation of relatively unpopular sociological doctrines. For, as a student of human manufactures, aware that all making is *per artem*, I could not but

see that, as Ruskin said, "industry without art is brutality", and that men can never be really happy unless they bear an individual responsibility not only for what they do but for the kind and quality of what they *make*. I could not fail to see that such happiness is forever denied to the majority under the conditions of making that are imposed upon them by what is euphemistically called "free enterprise", that is to say, under the conditions of production for profit rather than for use; and no less denied in those totalitarian forms of society in which the folk is just as much as in a capitalist regime reduced to the level of a proletariat. Looking at the works of art that are considered worthy of preservation in our museums, and what were once common objects of the marketplace, I could not but realize that a society can only be considered truly civilized when it is possible for every man to earn his living by the very work he would rather be doing than anything else in the world—a condition that has only been attained in social orders integrated on the basis of vocation, *svadharma*.

At the same time I should like to emphasize that I have never built up a philosophy of my own or wished to establish a new school of thought. Perhaps the greatest thing I have learnt is never to think for myself; I fully agree with André Gide that *toutes choses sont déjà dites*, and what I have sought is to understand what has been said, while taking no account of the "inferior philosophers". Holding with Heracleitus that the Word is common to all, and that Wisdom is to know the Will whereby all things are steered, I am convinced with Jeremias that the human cultures in all their apparent diversity are but the dialects of one and the same language of the spirit, and that there is a "common universe of discourse" transcending the differences of tongues.

This is my seventieth birthday, and my opportunity to say: Farewell, for this is our plan, mine and my wife's, to retire and return to India next year; thinking of this as an *astam gamana*, "going home". There we expect to rejoin our son Rama who, after travelling with Marco Pallis in Sikkim and speaking Tibetan there is now at the Gurukula Kangri learning Sanskrit and Hindi with the very man with whom my wife was studying there twelve years ago. We mean to remain in India, now a free country, for the rest of our lives.

I have not remained untouched by the religious philosophies

I have studied and to which I was led by way of the history of art. *Intellige ut credas!* In my case, at least, understanding has involved belief; and for me the time has come to exchange the active for a more contemplative way of life in which it would be my hope to experience more immediately, more fully at least a part of the truth of which my understanding has been so far predominantly logical. And so, though I may be here for another year, I ask you also to say: Goodbye—equally in the etymological sense of the word and in that of the Sanskrit *Svagā*, a salutation that expressed the wish “May you come into your own”, that is, may I know and become what I am. no longer this man So-and-So, but the Self that is also the Being of all beings, my Self and your Self.



## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dr Coomaraswamy died on September 9, 1947. He left his study in his home at Needham, Massachusetts, and went out to his garden; a little later, he lay down on the ground and told his wife he was dying. It is a Hindu custom to die on the ground ('for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return'). In his study several books were open to passages that dealt with death. A Greek Orthodox priest, known to Doña Luisa Coomaraswamy, said funeral prayers, and the body was cremated. Later, the ashes were taken to India and immersed at the Trivenisangam at Allahabad (Prayaga before it was renamed by the Muslims), a spot particularly sacred to Hindus. AKC had suffered from a heart ailment during the last year of his life, and he probably died of a coronary infarction.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC APPENDIX

This section is divided into four parts of which the first lists the works of Dr Coomaraswamy which are discussed or mentioned in the letters in this collection. We emphasize, however, that this is far from being a complete bibliography of the writings of this remarkably prolific and, in his later years, profound scholar. Readers interested in more complete listings of Dr Coomaraswamy's works are referred to one of the following:

*Ars Islamica*, IX, 1942, pp.125-142.

'Select Bibliography of the Writings of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy', pp 293-304 in the biography by Roger Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, His Life and Work*, Bollingen Series LXXXIX, Princeton University Press, 1977.

The Coomaraswamy *festschrift*, *Art and Thought*, edited by K. B. Iyer, Luzac, London, 1947, contains a briefer bibliography.

A bibliography that surely must approach definitiveness is *Ananda Coomaraswamy: a Bibliographic Record*, two volumes of 424 and 568 pages respectively, 1981 and 1984. The compiler was S. Durai Raja Singam, the man who in many respects was Boswell to Coomaraswamy's Johnson. This work covers AKC's output year by year from 1895 through his death in 1947, and beyond to 1980 with listings of posthumously published studies, reprints, new editions and translations. Unfortunately for scholars, the work was privately printed in limited numbers and distributed from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

*Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy: a Working Bibliography*, compiled by Rama P. Coomaraswamy, AKC's son, and published by the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, undated. In the Introduction, the compiler states that "Mr James Crouch of Australia has embarked upon the task of compiling a complete bibliography and has completed the period 1900-1906. This has been published in the *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies* (Vol III, July-December 1973,

pp 54–66). His work will take many years to complete.” As of this writing, a bibliography claiming definitiveness was nearing publication: *Ananda Coomaraswamy: Bibliography/Index*, compiled by L. Kanefsky, and to be published by Prologos Books, Berwick-upon-Tweed, England.

As for published collections of AKC’s major essays, the reader is referred to an outstanding selection in two volumes, companions to the biography mentioned above: *Coomaraswamy 1: Selected Papers, Traditional Art and Symbolism* and *Coomaraswamy 2: Selected Papers, Metaphysics*, which with the biography make Bollingen Series LXXXIX, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1977. A paperback edition of this important work has begun, though as of this writing only volume 1 has been released. Another collection of Dr Coomaraswamy’s studies, previously unpublished in collected form, is in preparation for publication by the Golgonooza Press, England, and is expected to bear the title, *On Being in One’s Right Mind*, which was the title of an AKC essay carried in *Review of Religion*, VII, New York, 1942.

Notable library collections of Dr Coomaraswamy’s works are to be found at Princeton University Library, while a significant but less complete collection is at the library of the Boston Museum of Fine Art, at which museum AKC worked thirty years. Another significant collection is to be found at the library of the Freer Gallery of Art, an element of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. It may also be noted that many of the libraries in the United States whose collections had assumed major proportions by the time of Dr Coomaraswamy’s death will have many of the scholarly journals in which he published.

A second section of this syllabus lists works by authors other than Dr Coomaraswamy which figure in these letters. Needless to say that the works in such a listing are of very uneven standing: they range from traditional Scriptures which were AKC’s ultimate bibliographical sources to topical works, some of which he disapproved of quite strongly. In the case of the Scriptures (whether of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism or Islam) and classical works from the several traditions, most of which are available in many editions, we give only the title. In the case of works of more topical interest, we have endeavored



to provide author, correct title and full imprint statement (data, publisher and place of publication), this for the convenience of readers who might wish to extend their researches in AKC's written sources. In a very few cases we have had to second guess information in certain of the letters in the form these were available to us, where, eg, AKC, writing from memory, gave an incorrect attribution or cited a chapter heading for a book title, etc.

Parts three and four list the works of two authors other than Dr Coomaraswamy, and a brief explanation of this unusual practice is in order. Since the early years of this century a very sizeable and most respectable body of traditionalist literature has arisen, especially in French and English and to a lesser extent in Spanish and Italian and other Western languages. There are numerous authors writing and publishing in the field of traditional studies, but three names are outstanding. The first to appear in published form was the Frenchman, René Guénon, whose works first began to be published before 1920 and which continue to be reprinted—in small editions, no doubt, but time after time so that they remain in print. Guénon's work served a catalytic function in Coomaraswamy's own intellectual maturation; and in 1933 this was publicly marked with the appearance of *A New Approach to the Vedas*, which was precisely this for AKC and for scholarship in the Anglophone world. The book was a profound study in the exegesis of several passages from the Upanishads and Vedic hymns and was public evidence of a watershed in Coomaraswamy's understanding and writing. From this time his personal interest and literary output were predominantly metaphysical: profound expositions of the ideas expressed in a work of art under study, whether an icon, a weapon, or a sculptural or architectural work. Other studies were devoted to literary motifs from the Scriptures, the classical literature of East or West, and from folklore. No doubt the understanding of all these ideas was germinally present all along with AKC, but acquaintance with the articulations of someone who had himself been in the 'land' of which he spoke, namely Guénon, was the spark and occasion which helped turn a remarkably erudite man into a man of great wisdom and even sanctity. A second edition of the above mentioned work, entitled simply *The Vedas* (Prologos Books, 1976) was appropriately dedicated to the memory of René

Guénon. And all this seems ample justification for including the Guénon bibliography, Part III of this syllabus.

Whitall Perry has remarked that Coomaraswamy may be taken to represent the perfections of the traditional arts, while Guénon may be considered as typifying the excellences of the traditional sciences. Standing between and above these two is the Franco-German, Frithjof Schuon, combining in his person the qualities found in Coomaraswamy and Guénon with much more besides. While lacking nothing in humane amplitude, Schuon's utterances present in a unique and surpassing degree an innascible quality that bespeaks realization; he has the sense of man, of nature (ie, creation), of God and of the Godhead or Self. He is quite without peer both in evident understanding and in the ability to articulate this understanding (the 'gift of tongues'). Schuon is thirty years younger, however, than Coomaraswamy, and was just beginning to publish in the last dozen years or so of Coomaraswamy's life. Nevertheless, AKC cited several of Schuon's early studies and made approving personal references to Schuon in several of his essays and letters. There can be no doubt whatsoever that the mature Coomaraswamy would have recognized the stature of Schuon. For this reason, and for the benefit of those readers who believe they have found something of their proper orientation in Coomaraswamy's letters and later essays, we think it proper to list the works of the premier spokesman for the traditionalist perspective which have been published in book form, and this list constitutes Part IV of this bibliographical appendix.

## PART I

### Works of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy mentioned in the Letters

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\* *SP* hereinafter = *Coomaraswamy, Selected Papers*, Bollingen Series LXXXIX, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1977.



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- 'Measures of Fire', *O Instituto*, C (100), 1942, Coimbra, Portugal; reprinted in *SP*, vol 2.
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- shire, England, 1908. Facsimile edition by Pantheon Books, New York, 1956.
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## PART II

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### PART III

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*La Crise du monde moderne*, 1927, 1946, 1956, 1969. English translation, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, Luzac, 1942; also editions in 1962, 1965, 1976.

*Autorité spirituel et pouvoir temporel*, 1929, 1930, 1947, 1964. *Saint Bernard*, 1929, 1951, 1959, 1973.

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\* The full imprint statement is given only for English language versions of Guénon's works.

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★ The full imprint statement is given only for English versions of Schuon's works.



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